

Project Abstract Summary

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93.434-Every Student Succeeds Act/Preschool Development Grants

Applicant Name

Maine Department of Education

Descriptive Title of Applicant's Project

Advancing a Unified Early Care and Education System for Maine Families

Project Abstract

Maine is launching a one-year initiative to create a more connected, high-quality early care and education system for children from birth through age five. Families currently face a patchwork of programs and services that can be confusing and difficult to navigate. This project seeks to change that by building a unified system that improves access, strengthens partnerships, and supports educators statewide.

The initiative begins by updating Maine's statewide needs assessment and strategic plan to reflect current realities, including where child care is available, what families need, and where gaps exist. These updates will guide how agencies, schools, and community partners work together under one shared vision for early learning.

To strengthen governance and partnerships, the project will align policies and funding streams across state agencies and programs such as Head Start, public pre-K, and child care. Local Action Labs will bring schools, providers, and families together to design solutions that expand access and improve quality, especially for children with disabilities and those in rural areas. Families will benefit from a roadmap toward a single-entry system that simplifies how they apply for and access services. Educators will gain access to a unified professional development network and statewide training in literacy, numeracy, and classroom strategies that support educators and children to co-regulate behaviors. The project also invests in data systems to reduce paperwork and improve decision-making. By linking information across programs, Maine will better understand who is being served and where gaps remain.

When complete, Maine will have a clear strategic plan, stronger governance, and practical tools that make early care and education easier to access and more effective for every child. This effort builds on Maine's commitment to ensuring that all children enter kindergarten ready to succeed.

Building Maine’s Unified Early Care and Education System
Office of Teaching and Learning
Maine Department of Education

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Project Summary

Project Title: Advancing a Unified Early Care and Education System for Maine Families

Maine Department of Education

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Maine proposes a comprehensive, one-year initiative to advance a unified, high-quality early care and education (ECE) system that ensures seamless access for families and sustainable support for providers. This project directly addresses the Preschool Development Grant Birth through Five (PDG B-5) priorities by (1) developing a shared statewide vision, (2) building a coherent governance and service delivery system, and (3) maximizing family access across mixed-delivery settings.

Maine will develop a shared statewide vision by updating our 2024 statewide needs assessment to reflect current supply and demand for child care, including infant/toddler care, Head Start and Early Head Start (Head Start) and public Pre-K. We will also identify gaps by geography and program type. Findings will inform an updated strategic plan that articulates a shared vision for ECE, fully integrates Head Start, and establishes state governance and regional coordination structures. Stakeholder engagement will occur through local partnerships, statewide agency meetings, and Maine's annual statewide early childhood conference, which will serve as a platform to test and refine the vision.

Maine's work will align fragmented policies and initiatives into a cohesive system. Key strategies include building a unified professional development network (PDN) by coordinating professional learning opportunities statewide, including emergent literacy and numeracy action plans, family engagement, and supporting classroom practices for helping children and educators co-regulate behaviors.

Maine will leverage the updated needs assessment, Help Me Grow expertise, regional mixed-delivery work, and quality stipends to ECE programs to expand access and options for families. This includes outlining strategies to build the infant/toddler care supply, strengthening family engagement through local work with child care programs and school districts, partnership with Head Start family service professionals, and designing a unified system for families to apply for and access services. These efforts will ensure families experience seamless ECE connections, regardless of funding stream or setting.

Maine will also integrate data by advancing an Early Childhood Integrated Data System (ECIDS) to streamline data collection and reporting, reduce administrative burden, and improve accountability. Finally, Maine will sustain its PDG B-5 work, ensuring that by December 2026 we have an actionable strategic plan, integrated governance structure, and measurable improvements in system alignment, workforce development, and family access.

Project narrative

The overarching goal for Maine’s PDG B-5 systems-building grant is to: *Develop a shared vision for a unified statewide system that improves families’ access to quality early care and education.* We will accomplish this goal by executing activities over the 12-month grant period that further the alignment of Maine’s ECE policies, funding, and programming regulations under the leadership of the Maine Children’s Cabinet. Our specific activities as well as measurable outcomes of progress are outlined in our approach.

Approach

Critical element 1: Statewide ECE needs assessment and strategic plan.

Governance structure. Maine will administer the PDG B-5 award through the Governor’s designated state entity: Maine Department of Education (DOE) in partnership with Maine Department of Health and Human Service’s (DHHS) Office of Child and Family Services (OCFS), Governor’s Office of Policy Innovation and the Future (GOPIF), and Children’s Cabinet (*Figure 1. Maine ECE Governance Structure*).

The cross-agency PDG Leadership Team and ECE Mixed Delivery Working Group will oversee the needs assessment and strategic plan, coordinating these efforts with the Maine Children’s Cabinet Early Childhood Advisory Council. Responsibility for oversight and execution of Maine’s PDG B-5 grant activities includes:

- **Lead accountable entity:** Maine DOE will be responsible for overall grant success and on time completion of grant activities. The PDG Leadership Team (*Table 1*) will meet weekly to oversee the PDG B-5 implementation efforts. The PDG Leadership team will regularly consult with Megan Welter, Associate Commissioner of Public Education, and Sandy Flacke, Deputy Director Special Services/619 Coordinator to ensure coordination

for all PDG B-5 activities related to mixed-delivery Pre-K programming for children with disabilities and coordination of early childhood special education (ECSE).

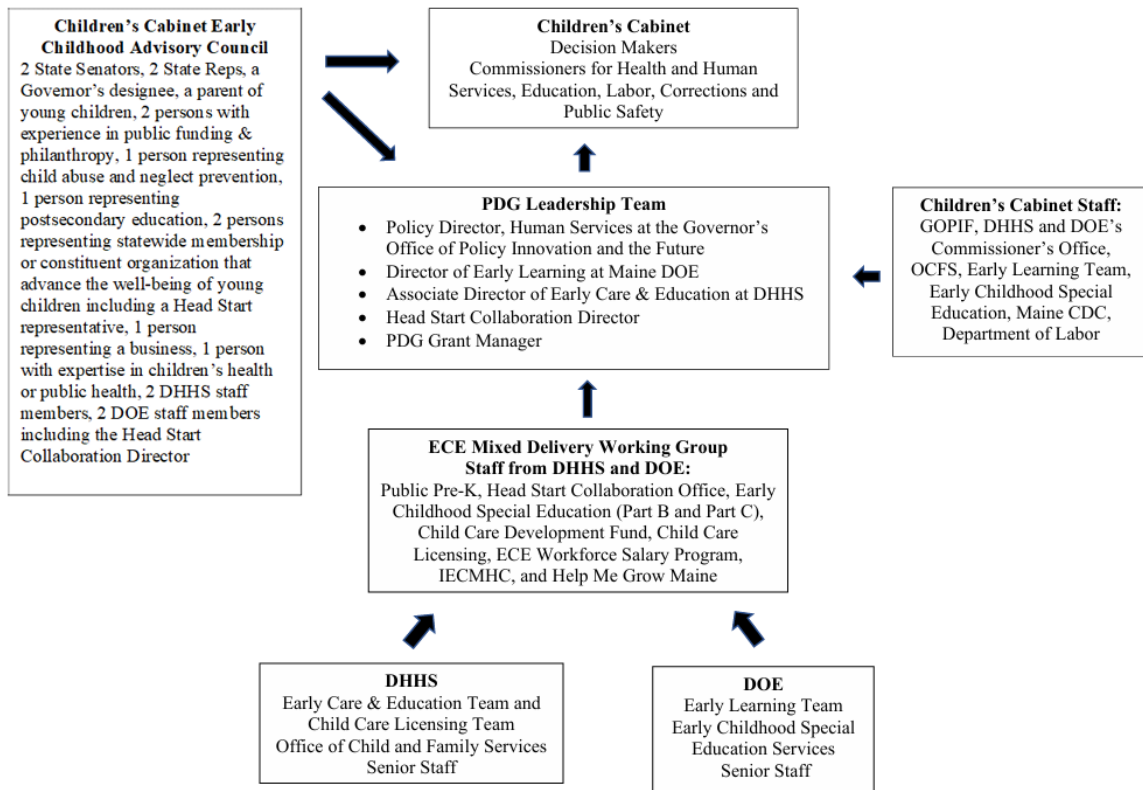
Table 1. Maine PDG B-5 Leadership Team

Team Member	Title	State Agency
Lee Anne Larsen	Director of Early Learning	Department of Education
Stacie McCoy	Director, Head Start Collaboration Office	Department of Education
Renee Reilly	PDG Grant Manager	Department of Education
Tara Williams	Associate Director of Early Care and Education	Department of Health and Human Services
Ana Hicks	Policy Director, Human Services	Governor’s Office of Policy, Innovation, and the Future

- **Contributing entities with shared accountability:** Maine Children’s Cabinet Early Childhood Advisory Council, ECE Mixed Delivery Working Group, DOE, DHHS
- **Supporting ECE system stakeholders:** Career and Technical Education programs, Maine Roads to Quality Professional Development Network (PDN), higher education institutions, local/regional hubs, Maine Head Start Grantees, child care providers, School Administrative Units (SAU), and family engagement partners.
- **Decision Makers:** Maine Children’s Cabinet Commissioners for Health and Human Services, Education, Labor, Corrections, and Public Safety

This governance structure has overseen all of Maine’s previous PDG B-5 grant activities, and includes the various levels of program, policy, and fiscal oversight and authority required to successfully fulfill the grant deliverables.

Figure 1. Maine ECE System Governance Structure (*see also in Attachments*)



Head Start representation: The Head Start Collaboration Office (HSCO) will be part of the project leadership team and grantee leaders will participate in data collection (supply/demand, unduplicated counts). Head Start Family Services professionals will support professional learning on family engagement for the state's ECE workforce and Head Start will be fully integrated into governance, outcomes, and accountability.

Maine's approach to systems-building is deeply informed by Head Start integration. Recent projects highlighting that include a HSCO partnership with state and national experts to align data systems, creating resources that connected ChildPlus, EmpowOR, and Program Information Report (PIR) reporting requirements with state processes. The goal of this collaborative work was to ensure interoperability and shared accountability across programs.

Similarly, Maine’s state supplemental funding for Head Start is coordinated with OCFS to align reporting and fiscal requirements, reinforcing coherence between federal and state investments. Maine invests \$6.1 million a year in Head Start, which is divided into contracts with all 10 Head Start agencies in Maine. The state partners with Head Start to provide funding that supports each grantee to serve more children and families, expand their programming, and meet their community needs more efficiently. These “flexible funds” pay for slots in Head Start programs for additional children and can support operations, including but not limited to staff recruitment and retention, specialized or community specific training not provided by national Head Start training and technical assistance, expanded hours, and support for high quality instructional materials. Over 700 children in Maine access Head Start and Early Head Start as a result of state funding. As of 2025, Maine is one of only 14 states that supplement federal Head Start funding with state general funds creating greater stability in our programming.

Head Start programs also play a critical role in quality initiatives such as the Pyramid Model training and technical assistance, contributing coaching expertise and leveraging regional technical assistance to strengthen social-emotional learning statewide. Innovative pilots like First 10 and First4ME have incorporated local Head Start programs to share lessons learned and replicate successful strategies. Finally, Maine’s Head Start Collaboration Director serves on Maine’s Kindergarten Entry Inventory pilot and has supported integration of Head Start assessment tools to inform statewide approaches to kindergarten readiness. These examples illustrate Maine’s commitment to integrating Head Start into its ECE system, advancing PDG B-5 priorities, and ensuring that policies and practices support child development across settings. *Needs assessment and strategic plan.* Meeting Maine’s PDG B-5 grant goal of developing a shared vision for a unified statewide ECE system will require up-to-date and accurate data about

the status of the current ECE system. Because Maine’s most recent needs assessment was completed in 2024, we will augment that work rather than duplicate it with an entirely new assessment. Maine’s 2024 Needs Assessment¹ was developed by a cross-agency leadership team working with RMC Research. To conduct the 2024 Needs Assessment, RMC worked with the leadership team to plan needs assessment activities that were conducted in fall 2023 and early winter 2024. RMC met with staff involved in the work of the Children’s Cabinet to corroborate and gather additional information about strategies that had been initiated since the previous Strategic Plan (2020). RMC and the Leadership Team designed a needs assessment approach that featured:

- Documentation of the policy, program, and funding changes since 2020 Strategic Plan,
- Engagement of a broad spectrum of stakeholders through in-person and remote meetings,
- Special attention to the perspectives of parents as consumers of ECE,
- Gathering qualitative data (e.g., interviews, focus groups) to understand existing gaps in services and the implications and effects of policies and programs,
- Implementation of a statewide survey of ECE providers, and
- Use of secondary data sources in the form of national and state reports, dashboards, planning documents, and surveys.

As a result of these efforts, Maine is confident that our 2024 Needs Assessment provides a comprehensive foundation for the state to build upon in meeting the PDG B-5 Systems-Building priorities. It identifies systemic gaps, offers actionable strategies, and aligns with the grant’s

¹ Dwyer, M. C. (2024, April). *State of Maine needs assessment: Children birth to age 5 and their families, update of 2019 needs assessment* (Rev. Dec. 24, 2024). Portsmouth, NH: RMC Research Corporation.

three core priorities and critical elements. Examples of alignment to the current grant priorities are included in Table 2.

Table 2: Maine 2024 Needs Assessment Alignment with Grant Priorities

Grant priority	Maine 2024 needs assessment alignment
Establish a unified vision guiding all ECE policies and funding streams.	Maine’s Children’s Cabinet and cross-agency workgroups exemplify governance structures that promote coordination. The needs assessment calls for breaking down silos and adopting a “no wrong door” approach for families, reinforcing a shared vision across agencies.
Build a Unified, Coherent Statewide ECE System	The assessment highlights existing fragmentation and recommends integrated data systems, common applications, and regional collaboratives. These strategies directly support the grant’s requirement for unified governance and streamlined operations.
Expand family access to ECE options and ensure seamless navigation.	Maine’s 2024 needs assessment identifies gaps in rural care, infant care, and non-traditional hours, and proposes strategies to expand supply and affordability. Initiatives like Help Me Grow Maine address barriers for families and support access.

This alignment also carries over to Maine’s 2025 Strategic Plan² because it was developed in tandem with the needs assessment. Maine’s strategic planning work began during the 2024 needs assessment. As participants in discussions identified and reflected on needs, they were also asked to suggest potential solutions. During a statewide summit held in July 2024 staff members of both DOE and DHHS had the opportunity to work with the completed needs assessment to inform the topics for priority solutions. Between November 2024 and January 2025, topical work groups led and staffed by members of Maine’s DOE and DHHS developed and refined the recommendations which form the basis for Maine’s 2025 Strategic plan.

Plan to build on Maine’s existing needs assessment and strategic plan. To build upon Maine’s existing needs assessment and strategic plan in ways that help Maine define its vision for a unified ECE system we need to augment those efforts with additional data to understand the full

² Dwyer, M. C. (2025, April). *State of Maine strategic plant: Children birth to age 5 and their families*. Portsmouth, NH: RMC Research Corporation.

ECE landscape. Maine will contract with Katherine Johnston, a data analyst who facilitated Maine’s initial work to establish an ECIDS in 2022. Katherine is familiar with Maine’s ECE data and will be able to begin the work quickly and complete it efficiently. Katherine’s gap analysis will build off the current ECIDS work funded through the PDG Renewal Grant. The PDG Leadership Team (PDG team) is currently finalizing this first pilot data integration project which integrates ECE data from five different systems across Maine DOE and DHHS (Table 3).

Table 3. Pilot Data Integration Programs and Data Systems

Program	Data System
Child Care Affordability Program (Maine’s Child Care Subsidy Program)	Baxter
Foster Care Child Care Assistance	Katahdin
Child Care Assistance for TANF Families	ACES
Public Pre-K	NEO
Child Development Services (Part C and Part B Section 619)	CINC

This pilot will provide state policymakers with a better understanding of the reach of publicly funded ECE programs. The integrated data will answer questions about how many children are served by each program, how many children are participating in multiple programs, what program participation looks like for particular ages and how well the state is reaching children with disabilities and low family incomes as well as children residing in more rural parts of the state. As we further build out the gap analysis in 2026, we will use the State Child Care Development Fund (CCDF) Market Rate Survey and child care licensing data to analyze child care program openings, closures, enrollment, and waitlists.

In addition to the child care data, a State Pre-K Status Update will augment and expand the existing needs data and gap analysis conducted in the 2024 assessment. We will also work with the Maine Head Start Directors’ Association to integrate data on children served in Maine’s Head Start programs. In addition, Maine will incorporate data related to early childhood special education (ECSE) by documenting Maine’s current efforts to shift Free and Appropriate Public

Education (FAPE) responsibilities from community-based organizations to Maine SAUs as well as updating identification and service provision rates. Maine's DOE Early Childhood Special Education leadership will be fully engaged in this effort as members of the ECE Mixed Delivery Working Group, and through collaborative leadership with DOE's Director of Early Learning. Building these additional data elements will help Maine more accurately estimate the availability and quality of existing ECE programs in the state, and advance Maine's work toward creating an unduplicated count of children served in existing ECE programs or awaiting services. To augment these administrative data sets, Maine will incorporate findings from its existing PDG grant work which includes a study of ECE funding in Maine, Maine's Early Childhood Workforce Salary Supplement Program Evaluation, and recommendations from the current grant's Pre-K Advisory Team.

Local engagement will also play a critical role in determining unmet needs and gaps in our system related to school-community partnerships in public Pre-K delivery. Maine's Early Childhood School-Community Specialist (formerly titled First 10 Community School Specialist) and Maine's Pre-K Partnership Specialist will lead work with child care providers, Head Start programs, home visitors, IDEA Part B and C providers, and SAUs at the local level as they form partnerships in mixed-delivery activities. These positions will also help local communities incorporate family outreach and engagement strategies and work to strengthen access through coordination of comprehensive services within the mixed-delivery system. Facilitating these partnerships on the ground will help to identify barriers to successful partnership as well as effective strategies that can be scaled statewide. Learning from those doing the work to develop seamless mixed-delivery programming for children and families ensures that we have a full picture of what is needed to create the universal, seamless system we envision.

The findings from Maine’s Early Childhood School-Community Specialist and Maine’s Pre-K Partnership Specialist technical assistance activities and facilitated school-community learning will inform both regional coordination and statewide strategies. This local-state input will ensure that the Maine’s strategic plan and shared vision reflect real-world conditions and support mixed-delivery partnerships.

Finally, Maine will build upon its 2024 needs assessment and strategic plan by using the State + Early Learning Systems Change Roadmap³ (Roadmap) as a foundational planning and accountability tool throughout the PDG B-5 project period. The Roadmap offers a structured, evidence-based framework for assessing system maturity, identifying priority areas, and tracking progress over time. By using this tool, Maine will ensure a transparent process to the statewide needs assessment and strategic plan updates that reflect stakeholder input and align with the state’s shared vision for unified ECE system.

With professional facilitation from Chris Dwyer of RMC, Maine’s PDG leadership team will convene a cross-agency group that includes DOE, OCFS, GOPIF, HSCO, and family engagement partners from across the ECE system to complete a baseline Roadmap assessment in early 2026. Chris’ work on Maine’s 2024 Needs Assessment and 2025 Strategic Plan make her an ideal candidate to conduct this work and complete it within the single project year. She is familiar with Maine’s ECE system and leadership, has established working relationships with the Children’s Cabinet, and is a respected and neutral facilitator who can quickly launch the project without lead time typically needed to establish background and build relationships. Chris will

³ Engage R+D & Early Childhood Governing and Finance Project. November 2025. *Public Early Learning Systems Roadmap for Change*.

work with the team to conduct an assessment using the Roadmap’s four domains: People (Unified Governing), Money (Comprehensive Financing), Progress (Systems Improvement Capacity), and Context (Conditions & Readiness) to evaluate the current state of Maine’s ECE system. Each domain includes staged indicators from “Early” to “Transforming,” which will help Maine identify strengths, gaps, and opportunities for improvement. This assessment will also provide baseline data for the project.

Findings from the Roadmap assessment will directly inform updates to Maine’s 2024 statewide needs assessment and strategic plan. For example, if governance is rated “Developing,” Maine will prioritize strategies to formalize cross-agency decision-making and strengthen accountability structures. Similarly, if financing is rated “Early,” Maine will accelerate efforts to align funding streams and expand sustainable financing models. This approach ensures that Maine’s updated 2025 strategic plan and shared vision reflect the status of Maine’s ECE landscape, advance PDG B-5 priorities, and integrate Head Start services and funding into a unified statewide system. To strengthen this work, Maine has been accepted into and will join the Early Childhood Governance and Finance Project (ECGFP; supported by the Early Childhood Funders Collaborative). The time period for this work is January 2026 through December 2027. This timing will strengthen Maine’s PDG B-5 activities as the PDG Leadership Team will complete the ECGFP cohort work in tandem with PDG B-5 grant activities. Coordinated leadership will ensure that Maine avoids duplication of effort in its PDG B-5 activities to develop Maine’s shared vision.

To validate and refine the strategic plan and shared vision, Maine will leverage key statewide convenings: 1) the Maine Early Childhood Conference, which will serve as a platform to “test drive” the strategic plan and gather feedback from practitioners, families, and partners;

and 2) the biannual ECE State Agency Meetings, where cross-agency leaders will finalize commitments and align implementation steps. Together, these updates will position Maine to advance PDG B-5 priorities by creating a cohesive roadmap that integrates Head Start, strengthens governance, and ensures families experience seamless access to quality ECE.

Critical element 2: Outcome strategies to advance program priorities.

Maine has chosen outcome strategies that will move our ECE system forward in two categories:

Category 1: Reconcile fragmented elements into a unified system, and ***Category 3: Align or***

share information and data systems. Maine has not chosen to address ***Category 2: Expand***

program availability and sustainability in this 12-month project period. With a focus on

Categories 1 and 3, Maine’s chosen outcome strategies will be informed by our 2024 needs

assessment, additional 2025 and 2026 data used to update the assessment, and the findings from

our Roadmap assessment. The Roadmap will serve as a decision-making tool for selecting and

sequencing outcome strategies under Critical Element 2.

Table 4. Maine’s outcome strategies to advance core program priorities

Category 1: Reconcile fragmented elements into a unified system.	
<i>Outcome Strategy 1: Leadership and Governance</i>	Maine will strengthen and formalize existing governance structures and increase Head Start integration by adding Maine’s HSCO Director to the PDG Leadership Team.
<i>Outcome Strategy 2: Promote mixed-delivery ECE community partnerships</i>	Maine will support local communities to design and deliver B-5 mixed-delivery ECE services, identify and mitigate barriers to success, and integrate findings into our shared vision and strategic plan and State Pre-K Roadmap.
<i>Outcome Strategy 3: Pilot a Unified ECE Workforce PDN</i>	Maine will build on its existing PDN by further integrating ECE professionals from all sectors and expanding training verification across systems.
<i>Outcome 4: Shared Professional Learning.</i>	Maine will promote a robust line up of shared professional learning opportunities focused on evidence-based literacy, numeracy, <i>Regulated Classroom</i> , and family engagement.

<i>Outcome Strategy 5: Promote seamless access for Maine families.</i>	Maine will expand its Help Me Grow (HMG) work, center family needs and preferences at the local level to inform statewide policy, regulatory, and fiscal priorities, and learn from and with Maine Head Start family service professionals.
Category 3: Align or share information and data systems.	
<i>Outcome Strategy 6: Integrate State Data Related to Maine’s ECE Workforce</i>	Maine will strengthen its ECE workforce data systems by expanding governance, building data integration capacity, and leveraging ECDataLab coaching to develop analytics, dashboards, and new use cases that inform policy and workforce planning.

Maine chose these strategies to address gaps identified in the 2024 assessment, such as the need to further unify the state’s PDN, expand financing alignment, and embed family voice in governance, while also leaving room to address any newly identified needs that arise from the additional data collection activities outlined above ([*Plan to build on Maine’s existing needs assessment and strategic plan*](#)). By tying outcome strategies to needs assessment data and prioritizing them through our Roadmap findings, Maine will demonstrate a clear rationale for each proposed activity and ensure alignment with the state’s vision for ECE. Below we summarize our outcome strategies aligned with the PDG B-5 program priorities. For each outcome strategy, we include activities, expected outcomes, and key performance indicators (KPI) to help us track project implementation and impact.

Category 1: Reconcile fragmented elements into a unified system.

Outcome Strategy 1: Leadership and Governance

Element	Details
Activities	Adopt Children’s Cabinet charter; define cross-agency Responsible, Accountable, Consulted, and Informed (RACI) roles; review, map, and consolidate all existing ECE state plans to align with shared vision, establish single-entry family access design and implementation plan
Outputs	RACI by April 2026; Charter by Oct 2026; Complete final approved vision for single-entry design by Dec 2026
Rationale	Addresses fragmented governance and family navigation gaps (2024 Needs Assessment)
Head Start	HSCO and grantees involved in charter and single-entry design
Advances Priorities	Shared vision; unified system; maximized family choice

The Maine Children’s Cabinet is the cornerstone of our state’s cross-agency governance structure, but our 2024 needs assessment revealed a critical gap: we must strengthen collaboration and communication among state agencies and community partners to expand access, improve efficiency, and eliminate duplication. To close this gap, Maine will:

- Analyze and consolidate all existing ECE plans across agencies and organizations to remove redundancies and align efforts.
- Ensure every plan reflects Maine’s shared vision and strategic priorities, creating a unified roadmap for ECE success.
- Launch a public-facing digital dashboard within the GOPIF web site that transparently maps activities and progress to this shared vision, driving accountability and engagement.

By aligning agencies, OCFS, DOE, and community partners under one vision and strategic plan, we will create an ECE system that is efficient, unified, and responsive to the needs of Maine’s children and families.

The project’s leadership across OCFS, DOE and GOPIF currently act as staff to the Children’s Cabinet making collaborative work, funding, and decision making easier for the project. Using the Maine Children’s Cabinet as our anchor, we will work to align operations across ECE policies, initiatives, and funding streams to reduce duplication, administrative burden, and inefficiencies. Maine will establish charter and operating protocols, including defining cross-agency decision-making for the Maine Children’s Cabinet. Through the Cabinet, Maine will also begin the work to define a single-entry family access vision and implementation plan. This work will be facilitated by GOPIF who leads the work of Maine Children’s Cabinet.

Table 5. Leadership and Governance Activities

Activities	Expected Outcomes	Key Performance Indicators
Develop and adopt a shared ECE vision statement across OCFS, DOE, GOPIF, and the Children’s Cabinet	Unified direction and priorities across agencies and partners	Vision endorsed by Cabinet and agency heads; vision referenced in agency plans and communications
Identify and review existing ECE state strategic plans	Map goals, activities and outcomes to inform shared vision and strategic plan	Draft strategic plan considers all critical ECE policy and programming for the state
Create a multi-year strategic plan for an efficient, unified ECE system	Clear plan that guides policies, funding, operations, and partner engagement	Strategic plan approved; implementation milestones defined; digital dashboard created, annual progress report published
Draft and adopt charter and operating protocols for the Children’s Cabinet	Formalized governance structure with clear scope, roles, cadence, and processes	Charter approved; protocols published; adherence to meeting cadence and decision protocols
Define and implement a cross-agency decision-making framework (e.g., criteria, escalation paths, voting/consensus)	Faster, clearer decisions; reduced bottlenecks	Decision making within project time limits; documented decisions with rationale and owners
Align ECE policies, initiatives, and funding streams across agencies	Reduced duplication; streamlined operations	Policy alignment map completed; duplicative policies identified; consolidated funding guidance issued
Design the single-entry family access vision (scope, user pathways)	Clear path and shared final vision for unified access to ECE services	Vision approved; impact considerations documented
Build an implementation plan for single-entry access (phasing, tech, staffing, budget)	Sequenced plan to operationalize single-entry	Implementation plan approved; dependencies and risks documented; pilot sites identified
Launch a cross-agency communications plan (with community partners)	Consistent, transparent messaging; improved partner trust	Communications calendar developed; partner briefings held quarterly; engagement metrics tracked

Outcome Strategy 2: Promote mixed-delivery ECE community partnerships

Element	Details
Activities	Facilitate local Action Lab workshops; develop partnership agreements; identify barriers to mixed-delivery partnerships to inform state strategic plan; design “In the Neighborhood” family engagement guide; implement quality improvement awards for licensed child care programs
Outputs	10-15 Action Lab workshops including family participation to inform family engagement guide; 25-30 child care programs move from Star 2-Star 3 in Maine QRIS
Rationale	Addresses gaps in mixed-delivery partnerships identified in Maine’s 2024 needs assessment and supports transition of preschool special education services
Head Start	Head Start programs are represented in Action Lab Workshops and inform family engagement guide; grantees’ participation and feedback frame partnership models
Advances Priorities	Shared vision; unified system; maximized family choice; increased access for children with disabilities

Maine will strengthen mixed-delivery partnerships among community child care, Head Start, and public Pre-K programs to expand access to ECE and ECSE services statewide. Building on successful local models and gaps identified in the 2024 Needs Assessment, Maine will use strategies from Minnesota's Mixed Delivery Action Lab Project to accelerate system development through collaboration, family-centered design, and data-informed decision-making.

Maine will adapt Minnesota's Action Lab model of structured, cross-sector collaboration to support the development of regional mixed-delivery partnerships. Relying on Minnesota's lessons learned, Maine will tailor similar strategies to accomplish our goal of hearing from local communities about their needs and preferences for a mixed-delivery ECE system and using that information to design our statewide shared vision and strategic plan. Through facilitated design workshops, Maine's Pre-K Partnership Specialist and Early Childhood School-Community Specialist will convene SAUs, child care providers, Head Start grantees and family services professionals, home visitors, early intervention and ECSE professionals, and family child care educators to co-create local services models to serve children B-5. These sessions will use Action Lab protocols to identify shared goals, clarify roles, and develop partnership agreements aligned with Maine Department of Education, Chapter 124: Basic Approval Standards: Public Preschool Programs. They will also provide time and space for thinking about access to infant and toddler care within the community. As the mixed-delivery system expands in Maine, we need to ensure that our model does not have an unintended consequence of reducing infant and toddler care as community partners focus on Pre-K partnerships which allow for higher ratios and group sizes with a lower break-even cost. Using the Action Labs to gather ideas and successes as well as potential barriers to infant and toddler care will be a critical parallel process in this work.

During these workshops, facilitators will also document barriers to partnership that are highlighted by participants (e.g., disparate compensation across settings for the same positions and qualifications, regulations that are overly restrictive or don't translate across settings, etc.). We will also engage families as we expand mixed delivery, ensuring that school-community partnerships are responsive to families' needs and expand access.

This work will also support Maine's transition of preschool special education services to SAUs. As SAUs take on the role of overseeing Part B 619 services for their districts, ensuring robust mixed-delivery Pre-K program options will help to ensure that children with disabilities can access IDEA services in the least restrictive environment (LRE). DOE's Pre-K Partnership Specialist and Early Childhood School-Community Specialist will provide technical assistance to schools, Head Start programs, and community child care partners to build agreements and infrastructure for successful partnerships that meet local needs, ensure delivery of ECSE services in LREs, inform the State Pre-K Roadmap, and further the state's shared vision. Successful Pre-K partnerships to expand access to early learning settings for children with disabilities will also be supported with resources and professional development (PD) from Maine DOE's Early Childhood Special Education Division through their ongoing work with cohorts of SAUs to support the move. Findings from the Action Labs about barriers or challenges to partnerships will be incorporated into the work of Maine's ECE Mixed Delivery Working Group which advises on updates to Chapter 124 (approval standards for SAUs that implement public preschool programs) to promote school-community partnership formation.

As part of the local mixed-delivery coordination, Maine will implement targeted Quality Improvement Awards with licensed child care programs. This will increase licensed child care programs' ability to successfully partner with SAUs, while also supporting the stability of the

sector and infant and toddler care in Maine. We will build off the success of Maine’s Quality Improvement Award initiative in the previous PDG B-5 grant. In 2024 and 2025, 149 child care programs earned quality improvement awards. 50.3% were child care centers and 49.7% were family child care programs. 27 programs (18%) were able to sustain their quality rating with the award. 122 programs (82%) increased their star rating during the award period.

- 75 programs increased to Star 3
- 35 programs increased to Star 4 (including programs that moved from Star 2 to Star 4)
- 12 programs met or maintained national accreditation, a Star 5

In total, there were 152 Star increases, with 92 programs successfully moving up one Star, and 30 programs moving up two Stars. Implementation of targeted quality improvement awards in 2026 will support access to infant and toddler care, the ECSE transition in Maine, the expansion of public Pre-K, and the mixed-delivery Action Labs.

Table 6. Mixed-Delivery Partnership Activities

Activities	Expected Outcomes	Key Performance Indicators
Host 10 – 15 Action Labs across the 9 superintendent regions (at least 1 per region with the option of 2 in larger regions)	Regional mixed-delivery partnership plans developed and inform state strategic plan	10 – 15 Action Labs successfully launched; 10-15 community roadmaps completed: minimum 80% participant satisfaction
Pilot “In the Neighborhood” Guides	Increased family engagement and co-created guide	75% or more families report relevance; 80% of school and program staff report guide as useful to their work
Implementation of Quality Improvement Awards with technical assistance to support each program’s individualized quality improvement plan.	25-30 child care programs move from a Star 2 to a Star 3 or higher in Maine’s QRIS	Increase in child care programs eligible for Pre-K and ECSE partnerships.
Document barriers to partnerships and elements that contribute to success	Barriers identified for state policy makers and mitigated through policy or regulatory revisions	Reduction in barriers; Increase in new partnership applications and plans
Co-design a State Pre-K Partnership Roadmap with a cross-agency Mixed-Delivery Working Group to strengthen mixed-delivery collaboration statewide	A collaboratively developed roadmap with clear guidance, process steps, roles, and resources based upon successful mixed-delivery Pre-K models	Completion and public release of the roadmap document by November 2026

Activities	Expected Outcomes	Key Performance Indicators
Embed Action Lab findings into State Pre-K Partnership Road Map	Roadmap reflects local input and family voice	Roadmap approved and published by December 2026; 80% or more stakeholder endorsement

Outcome Strategy 3: Pilot a Unified ECE Workforce Professional Development Network

Element	Details
Activities	Strengthen MRTQ PDN services across the ECE system, including Head Start and public pre-K, and expand use for early elementary educators (K-3); align training verification
Outputs	Pilot cross-sector training enrollment and state approved training verification by September 2026
Rationale	Reduce duplication; addresses workforce capacity gaps identified in Maine’s 2019 and 2024 needs assessments
Head Start	Head Start staff are in the state ECE Workforce Registry and have full participation in the PDN
Advances Priorities	Unified workforce system; shared vision; improves family choice via quality

To create efficiencies and identify administrative duplication, Maine will focus on unifying parts of the ECE system that are currently siloed. We will start by piloting a unified PDN for the ECE workforce. Currently the PDN, funded through Child Care Development Fund (CCDF) quality funds, primarily serves the child care sector and Head Start programs. Maine will pilot coordination and alignment to strengthen connections with public Pre-K, and other ECE professionals in elementary schools. OCFS will leverage braided funding to ensure the PDN policies and practices can be responsive to the full ECE system, and the PDG Leadership Team will identify barriers that arise in piloting unification of the PDN (e.g. training verification across sectors, etc.) as well as any workforce challenges that arise in the Action Lab workshops. Piloting policies for a cross-sector, unified PDN will give the Maine Children’s Cabinet and state leadership information about how Maine can streamline verification of ECE workforce training, as well as employment history and career roles. Additional workforce needs identified in local Action Labs (e.g., lack of staff who meet the state Pre-K or Head Start requirements) will be addressed through existing initiatives developed in earlier PDG B-5 grant funding such as an apprenticeship program, workforce stipends, etc.

Table 7. Unified ECE Workforce PDN Activities

Activities	Expected Outcomes	Key Performance Indicators
Design and launch PDN pilot coordination plan	Clear scope and structure for cross-sector PDN	Pilot plan approved; sectors engaged; timeline and milestones published
Create cross-sector training verification	Standardize quality assurance for PDN services	Verification protocol approved; $\geq 90\%$ compliance in pilot
Establish data-sharing processes for workforce training and credentials	Improved ability to track and verify workforce qualifications	Data-sharing agreements signed; credential verification time reduced $\geq 25\%$
Implement PDN pilot and monitor performance	Evidence of feasibility and impact of unified PDN	Pilot launched; participation rate $\geq 80\%$ of target; satisfaction scores $\geq 4/5$
Analyze pilot outcomes and develop recommendations for statewide PDN	Data-driven action plan for full PDN unification	Evaluation report completed; recommendations endorsed by Children’s Cabinet

Outcome Strategy 4: Shared Professional Learning

Element	Details
Activities	Scale <i>Regulated Classroom</i> Training; provide statewide evidence-based literacy and numeracy PD; work with Head Start Family Services staff to deliver PD on family engagement.
Outputs	80 educators trained in <i>Regulated Classroom</i> model by Aug 2026; coaching to support implementation through existing coaching network; each shared professional learning opportunity will be representative of Pre-K, Head Start, and child care educators.
Rationale	Responds to needs assessment data (2019, 2024) identifying challenging behavior as a primary PD need; Builds on Maine’s literacy and numeracy initiatives and expands to include Pre-K programs across all settings; Responds to needs assessment request for support for working with families (2024).
Head Start	Align PD calendars; Head Start coaches participate; Head Start educator uptake in PDN
Advances Priorities	Shared vision; unified PD; family choice via quality

Maine will also deliver shared PD across the state including expanding Maine’s use of *Regulated Classroom Training* in response to Maine’s needs assessment data (2019 and 2024) indicating educators’ need for technical assistance and training related to challenging behavior. Maine also has the 2nd highest preschool expulsion rate in the country, indicating a need to support educators in this area of practice⁴. We will also expand our existing literacy and numeracy professional learning opportunities to ensure extension into all ECE settings in the

⁴ Gilliam, W. S. (2005). *Prekindergarteners left behind: Expulsion rates in state prekindergarten systems*. New Haven, CT: Yale University Child Study Center.

state. The Maine DOE has launched plans to improve reading and math skills among students in the state. These plans include evidence-based teaching strategies and updated educator training workshops throughout the state. Maine’s will build on these plans by offering shared literacy and numeracy PD in multiple sessions in spring, summer, and fall of 2026. Finally, Head Start family services professionals will lend their knowledge and expertise to design and deliver family engagement training throughout the state for Head Start, child care and Pre-K educators.

PDG B-5 training and technical assistance activities will be aligned to Head Start and other existing PD calendars to ensure broad engagement and access; offerings will be published on the PDN website. *Regulated Classroom* trainings will be offered in Q2, Emergent Literacy trainings in Q3, Numeracy and family engagement trainings in Q4 of calendar year 2026.

Enrollment and/or state-approved credit for these PD sessions will be integrated into Maine’s PDN and statewide ECE workforce registry. Maine’s PDN technical assistance and coaching network, Head Start coaches, and Maine’s ECE Consultation for ME, Maine’s statewide Infant and Early Childhood Mental Health Consultation (IECMHC) program will be engaged to provide follow-up coaching related to the Regulated Classroom, literacy, and numeracy trainings to ensure consistency of implementation and to build capacity across the state’s ECE system.

Table 8. Shared Professional Learning Activities

Activities	Expected Outcomes	Key Performance Indicators
Expand access to Regulated Classroom Training to address challenging behavior	Educators gain strategies for co-regulating behaviors effectively	Q2 sessions delivered; ≥90% participant completion; post-training confidence scores for 80% of participants ≥4/5 on Likert rating scale
Deliver Emergent Literacy professional learning aligned with Maine’s State Literacy Action Plan	Improved educator capacity to support early literacy development	Q3 sessions delivered; ≥80% participants report increased knowledge; literacy practices observed in classrooms
Deliver Numeracy-focused professional learning aligned with Maine’s State Numeracy Action Plan	Strengthened numeracy instruction in early learning settings	Q4 sessions delivered; ≥80% participants report increased confidence; numeracy strategies integrated into lesson plans

Activities	Expected Outcomes	Key Performance Indicators
Deliver Family Engagement training and PD	Increased family engagement strategies used across Head Start, Pre-K, and child care settings	Q4 sessions delivered; ≥80% of participants report increased confidence in family engagement strategies
Offer multiple PD sessions statewide; align dates and market through state PDN calendar	Broad access to high-quality PD for ECE workforce	≥3 statewide PD cycles completed
Integrate PD enrollment and credit into Maine’s PDN and workforce registry	Streamlined tracking of PD participation and credentials	PD sessions listed in PDN; credits automatically recorded in registry
Collect and analyze participant feedback and impact data	Continuous improvement of PD offerings	Feedback response rate ≥70%; improvement actions documented; positive trend in educator feedback

Outcome Strategy 5: Promote seamless access for Maine families.

Element	Details
Activities	Leverage Help Me Grow to increase and unify ECE system access including IDEA Part C and Part B (Section 619) services; Promote <i>The BASICS</i> campaign to support families to promote learning at home
Outputs	Help Me Grow coordination of unified process for family access; families supported to access Part B and C services and promote children’s learning.
Rationale	Help Me Grow ensures “no wrong door” to ECE system
Head Start	Maine will engage Head Start family service professionals and grantees in work to increase access to ECE programs and inform single-access point for families
Advances Priorities	Ensuring that families with young children have a seamless experience accessing ECE resources and services

Maine will ensure that families with young children have a seamless experience accessing ECE opportunities by leveraging Help Me Grow (HMG) to lead grant activities that support unified referral and application processes. The work will be guided by Maine’s Family Partnership Framework and completed in collaboration with Head Start family service professionals, Maine State Parent Ambassadors, Maine’s Collaborating Partners Advisory Group, Maine’s Early Intervention Workgroup, and the Maine Parent Federation, Maine’s statewide family network for parents of children with disabilities. HMG will facilitate the work to create a plan for how Maine can further strengthen family access. The work will focus on designing a unified application process for families in Maine to apply for ECE services or to determine eligibility for services. Since HMG serves as a central location for families to learn

about programs and services for young children, their expertise will be important in bringing together stakeholder conversations and determining what will work for families. The project’s HMG Grow Resource Specialist will support family access to the ECE system, including care coordination and connections for families with infants and toddlers and children with disabilities. Finally, Maine will build on its work with *The Basics*TM, an initiative that provides resources to parents and caregivers to support the healthy development of children. *The Basics* provides tools and strategies to implement a community parenting campaign that gives families and caregivers valuable information on supporting child development. Community *Basics* campaigns engage a variety of partners in delivering messaging around five practices that support brain development in children ages 0-5. These practices, distilled from decades of research, lay a foundation for school readiness that correlates with higher outcomes in both literacy and math as children progress in school⁵. Maine has already invested in *The Basics* resources. During the PDG B-5 grant period Maine will implement an outreach plan to help more parents and caregivers participate in and learn from *The Basics*. Together, these initiatives will help Maine families experience seamless connections to services regardless of funding stream or setting.

Table 9. Activities to Promote Family Access and Options

Activities	Expected Outcomes	Key Performance Indicators
Leverage HMG’s data to inform statewide needs assessment updates	Improved understanding of families’ needs and increased early identification and referrals for developmental concerns	HMG data shared during needs assessment and strategic planning processes
Use Maine’s HMG project and staff to connect families of children with disabilities or developmental concerns to IDEA Part C and Part B (Section 619) services—	More families access developmental screenings and early intervention services, Increased referrals to IDEA Part C and Part B services	Number of families referred to HMG services; Family satisfaction with referral and support process; Number of children receiving developmental screenings and follow-up services

⁵ Third Sector New England, Inc. (2020). The science behind The Basics principles (Version 2.0). The Basics, Inc. <https://www.thebasics.org>

Activities	Expected Outcomes	Key Performance Indicators
including developmental screenings, referrals, and EPSDT		
Link HMG processes with Head Start family services and local mixed-delivery Pre-K partnerships	Families are connected to all ECE programs, regardless of funding stream or setting	HMG updated protocols with families support access to child care, Head Start, and public Pre-K
Design single-entry family access for early childhood services and ECE programs	Maine has a plan for building streamlined access for families	The Maine Family Partnership Framework guides the design process. The plan includes policy and practice revisions and data and technology updates required for implementation
Maine Parent Federation informs single-entry family access for families of children with disabilities	Maine's single-entry family access is responsive to families of children with disabilities	Maine's single-entry design includes all children and families
Support awareness and use of <i>The Basics</i> campaign as a foundational strategy for supporting child development in the birth-age 5 span	Broader public awareness of <i>The Basics</i> principles across communities; Increased integration of <i>The Basics</i> into ECE programs and family routines; Improved parent confidence in supporting early development at home	Number of families reached through campaign materials or events; Number of ECE programs integrating <i>The Basics</i> into curriculum

Maine's Category 1 Strategies advance: (1) Shared statewide vision (governance charter, RACI, plan consolidation), (2) Unified, coherent ECE system (single-entry design; operations alignment), (3) Maximized family options (mixed-delivery partnerships; HMG access).

Category 3: Align or share information and data systems.

Outcome Strategy 6: Integrate State Data Related to Maine's ECE Workforce

Element	Details
Activities	Integrate workforce data across DOE/OCFS/DOL/PDN; Develop data use case; develop an application programming interface (API) and complete technical discovery; Use integrated data set to answer policy questions and assess return on investments.
Outputs	API prototype by Jun 2026; Head Start data connected by Aug 2026; pilot by Oct 2026; data dashboard
Rationale	Eliminates duplicative reporting; enables analytics and access
Head Start	Integrate Head Start data elements; grantee participation; dashboards; build upon the HSCO work to outline Head Start and community action programs data systems and reporting requirements; Ensure Head Start represented on ECIDS Governance Committee
Advances Priorities	Unified system; shared vision; maximized family choice

To support informed decisions related to policy and programming for Maine’s ECE workforce, the team will strengthen Maine’s ECE workforce data systems by convening a cross-agency working group to identify and refine critical policy questions, leveraging and expanding the ECIDS Governance Committee to include key partners such as DOL and PDN, and building data integration capacity through state infrastructure and technical expertise. The work will include engaging in the ECDataLab cohort. The ECDataLab team will provide coaching and technical assistance from national experts to support the Maine team to build capacity and the analytical tools to support policy makers to access key ECE integrated data. The technical assistance and approach will help the Maine team develop analytics with existing use cases and to build out a new data use case related to the ECE workforce. With technical assistance, the team will develop data dashboards, identify gaps in the state’s current analytic capacity, and anticipate future data needs. The state team will participate in multi-state cohort gatherings that bring state leaders together to learn from each other, share ideas, best practices, and hold each other accountable for progress. As part of the cohort, the Maine team will also participate in the co-development of a use case and facilitated co-creation of code in open-source platforms to implement new dashboards. The entire state team will build their capacity to design sustainable, high-use tools that help address pressing program and policy priorities. (*See also, ECDataLab Letter of Support in Attachments*). Together, these actions advance Maine’s development of a comprehensive ECIDS to inform workforce planning and policy. Specific activities are included in Table 10.

Table 10. ECIDS Workforce Data Activities

Activities	Expected Outcomes	Key Performance Indicators
Convene a cross-agency working group to collaboratively identify and refine a set of critical policy questions about the ECE workforce	DOE, DHHS, DOL, PDN, and Children’s Cabinet staff develop a set of policy questions	Frequency of meetings and participation rate of committee members; Set of policy questions to be used in data integration pilot
Leverage the existing ECIDS Governance Committee and expand it to include representatives from DOL and PDN	Developed plan to integrate data related to policy questions; identified gaps in data or other needs to conduct pilot data integration	Refined list of policy questions that can be answered with existing data sets
Build workforce data integration capacity using the state infrastructure and technical staff from the Office of Information Technology	Increased interagency collaboration and data governance capacity, and strengthened partnerships with DOE, DHHS, DOL, and Maine’s PDN	Integrated workforce data from DOE, DHHS, DOL, and PDN
Engage actively in recurring coaching sessions with the ECData Lab cohort to learn from peer states, national experts, and collaborators	Enhanced capacity and learning through participation in the ECDataLab cohort; Cohort insights applied to Maine’s ECE workforce data use case	Attendance, contributions, and learnings documented from ECDataLab cohort
Document the process, templates, legal guidance, and lessons learned from the workforce data use case	Maintain the Governance Committee membership from office directors and ensure legal teams continue to support data sharing protocols	Clear processes and legal frameworks for future data integration projects and refined and standardized DOE and DHHS data sharing agreements
Conduct an integrated data use case to answer key policy questions and build on the state’s effort to develop an ECIDS	Complete integration of data from five systems across Maine DOE, DOL, and DHHS; Validate data quality and ensure legal compliance	Number of key policy questions addressed through the data use case; a linked dataset that integrates ECE workforce PD, employment, credentialing, and compensation data.
With support from ECDataLab, members of the data team will participate in facilitated co-creation of code in open-source platforms to implement new dashboards	Fully develop a new data dashboard to support the Children’s Cabinet to access data needed to make informed program and policy decisions	The development of usable data products and visualizations including a data dashboard.

Maine’s Category 3 strategies advance: (1) Shared vision (data governance under Children’s Cabinet), (2) Unified system (ECIDS integration linking Head Start and state data), (3) Increased family options (real-time information improves navigation and access).

Critical element 3: Tracking project impact.

Maine will implement a comprehensive performance measurement and evaluation framework to assess progress toward PDG B-5 priorities and the state's unified ECE vision. Our approach integrates baseline data, process measures, and outcome indicators across governance, workforce, PD, and family access strategies. We will track project impact through three components:

1. **Baseline and Comparative Analysis:** Maine will augment needs assessment data by integrating additional data sets to conduct a complete gap analysis for our system. We will also conduct a Roadmap baseline assessment in early 2026 across four domains (Governance, Financing, Systems Improvement, Conditions and Readiness). We will use Maine's 2024 Needs Assessment, findings from the updated gap analysis, and findings from the Roadmap assessment as baseline reference points for measuring change.
2. **Performance Monitoring:** Maine will monitor implementation fidelity for each outcome strategy using quarterly progress checks. Baseline values and sources will be specified per KPIs for each outcome strategy and included in quarterly progress reviews.
3. **Outcome and Impact Evaluation:** Maine will compare end-of-year results to baseline data to assess tangible improvements in system alignment, workforce development, and family access. We will also disaggregate data by geography, program type, and population characteristics to gain a full understanding of impact as well as gaps that remain. The PDG Leadership team will ensure that Head Start participation and outcomes are included in all analysis.

Table 11. Key Metrics and Data Sources

Category	Key Metrics	Data Sources
<i>Outcome Strategy 1: Leadership and Governance</i>	Children’s Cabinet charter adoption; decision-making protocols; strategic plan milestones	Meeting records; Strategic Plan; Roadmap assessment; document adherence to defined timelines
<i>Outcome Strategy 2: Promote mixed-delivery ECE community partnerships</i>	Maine’s State Pre-K Partnership Roadmap; Increased school-community partnership agreements; Maine Pre-K standard revisions	Completion rates for Action Labs; Action Lab process notes and documented barriers; recommendations for state-wide implementation
<i>Outcome Strategy 3: Pilot a Unified ECE Workforce Professional Development Network.</i>	PD enrollment; PDN training verification	PDN system training data; Workforce Registry reports
<i>Outcome 4: Shared Professional Learning.</i>	Professional Learning attendance across Birth-grade 3 educators in Maine	PDN system training and attendance data; coaching events logged in PDN system
<i>Outcome Strategy 5: Promote seamless access for Maine families.</i>	HMG outreach and response; plan for single entry pilot designed and approved	HMG data on outreach; Family attendance at Action Labs, Analytics for The Basics messaging campaign
<i>Outcome Strategy 6: Integrate State Data Related to Maine’s ECE Workforce</i>	ECIDS enhancements; Head Start data linkage; API development milestones	ECIDS dashboard; data-sharing agreements; technical documentation

Despite Maine’s commitment to leveraging existing ECE systems work and tightly managing this 12-month grant through project management and tracking strategies, we realize that there will be challenges to our success. Table 12 outlines potential barriers to our project and anticipated solutions to keep the PDG B-5 work moving forward and on track.

Table 12. Barriers and Challenges

Barrier/Challenge	Mitigation Strategy	Success Indicator
Spending funds within grant period	Narrowed scope of activities to those most feasible; contract for additional administrative support for procurement and contracting	All funds are obligated and expended by December 2026
Designing and implementing single-entry access within one year may be ambitious	Start with detailed plan and phased implementation; leverage HMG and Head Start family services expertise	Roadmap completed; stakeholder endorsement > or = 75%
Data integration work is time consuming and fraught with potential data sharing blocks	Maine will use the same staff and existing ECIDS governance committee to ensure immediate start-up and to leverage existing	Integrated workforce data set a go-to resource for answering policy questions and informing return on investments

Barrier/Challenge	Mitigation Strategy	Success Indicator
	relationships, data sharing agreements, and technical expertise	
Engaging busy working families in local mixed-delivery system design	Work with Head Start, Pre-K and Child Care programs as well as HMG staff to outreach to families; leverage community gathering spaces (libraries, places of worship, etc.) to recruit families through information sessions	100% of local Action Lab teams include a minimum of 2 family representatives

Reporting and Continuous Improvement

The Maine PDG project team will produce semiannual performance reports aligned with ACF requirements. These performance reports and findings will be shared with the Maine Children’s Cabinet and the Children’s Cabinet Early Childhood Advisory Council to make mid-course corrections. Maine will use PDG B-5 project evaluation results to refine strategies and embed successful practices into Maine’s long-term ECE policy framework.

Bonus: Policies supporting child development across systems

State Advisory Council: Maine Children’s Cabinet and the Children’s Cabinet Early

Childhood Advisory Council

The Maine Children’s Cabinet is housed in the Governor’s Office of Policy Innovation and the Future (See also [Figure 1. Maine ECE System Governance Structure](#)). The Maine Children’s Cabinet plays a vital role in convening and facilitating coordination across state agencies on initiatives and policies that will improve and promote the healthy development of children and youth in Maine. Maine Children’s Cabinet members include the Commissioners of DHHS, DOE, DOL, Public Safety, and Corrections. In collaboration with key staff from each of these agencies, the work of the Governor’s Children’s Cabinet is coordinated by Ana Hicks, PDG Leadership Team member and GOPIF staff.

The Children's Cabinet meets monthly, with staff from the Departments comprising the Children's Cabinet meeting regularly in between monthly meetings to maintain open communication about changes and developments in programming and policies across state agencies for children and youth, coordinate the implementation of specific strategies through ad hoc and standing workgroups, and identify new opportunities to collaborate across programs to advance the Children's Cabinet's strategies and goals.

The Children's Cabinet strategic plans lay out two overarching goals:

- All Maine children enter kindergarten prepared to succeed.
- All Maine youth enter adulthood healthy, connected to the workforce and/or education.

The Maine DOE, in partnership with DHHS, coordinates PDG grant activities through the Children's Cabinet as part of the state's efforts to build needed infrastructure and capacity to create a more coordinated, efficient, and high-quality mixed-delivery system for children ages birth to five and their families. The plan builds upon the successful cross-agency work to ensure that all children enter kindergarten prepared to succeed.

The Children's Cabinet Early Childhood Advisory Council (CCECAC) is the state's legislatively established Council that focuses on the implementation of ECE policy and programming in Maine and serves as the State Advisory Council on ECE. The Council advises the Maine Children's Cabinet and other policymakers on a range of issues related to ECE and works to ensure statewide coordination and collaboration among the wide range of ECE programs and services in the State, including child care, Head Start, ECSE, early intervention, and public Pre-K programs. Its members include parents, health care providers and representatives from child care, Head Start programs, philanthropy, business, and organizations that advance the well-being of children. The CCECAC meets monthly and is staffed by the

Maine's Children's Cabinet coordinator. The CCECAC has served as the advisory committee for Maine's two preschool development grants and will continue in this role for the systems-building grant.

The Children's Cabinet and the CCECAC seek input from parents in a variety of ways. Parents are active members of the CCECAC, attending the monthly meetings and providing regular input and guidance on the work of the council and the Children's Cabinet. The Children's Cabinet participates in cross agency efforts to elevate parent voice and family engagement in all our work. For example, parents have been influential in driving the development of Maine's Child Safety and Family Well-being plan which includes key ECE initiatives and informs the Children's Cabinet efforts to strengthen and coordinate programs for families with children. In addition, parents in Maine's Parent Ambassador program (a leadership development and advocacy initiative for parents) have played a crucial advisory role: providing critical feedback in the development of Maine's PDG Needs Assessment; participating in a panel at two Early Childhood Summits to advise school administrators, child care programs and state agency staff on best practices for family engagement; and participating in the state's Collaborating Partners Advisory Group which serves as the advisory group for the HMG program.

Evidence-Based Literacy Instruction: Maine's Statewide Approach

Maine has embraced a bold vision: every child in the state will become a confident, capable reader through high-quality, evidence-based instruction. This commitment is at the heart of the Maine State Literacy Action Plan, a comprehensive strategy that weaves the science of reading into every layer of the education system—from teacher preparation to family engagement.

Maine’s Literacy Action Plan begins with building the instructional capacity of our educators. We are working to align Maine’s educator preparation programs to ensure that every future teacher graduates with deep knowledge of evidence-based reading practices. This includes a dedicated reading methods course and explicit instruction in phonics, decoding, and foundational literacy skills. By embedding these requirements into teacher preparation, our state is building a workforce ready to deliver instruction that reflects decades of research on how children learn to read.

Through the Maine Evidence-Based Literacy Initiative, we are also creating a *Literacy Playbook* that offers tiered strategies, guidance on instructional materials, and interventions for struggling readers. A statewide Literacy Educator Leadership Council will bring together experts and practitioners to elevate promising practices and maintain coherence across districts. We will track our progress through a public dashboard that celebrates local successes and drives continuous improvement.

Professional learning is a cornerstone of Maine’s approach and this PDG B-5 project will leverage the state’s early literacy PD to extend the state’s work into community-based child care and Head Start programs. ECE educators will have access to regional Literacy Hubs, where they can engage in collaborative activity and lesson study cycles and receive coaching to refine their practice. The annual Maine Literacy Summer Institute provides interdisciplinary learning opportunities, while virtual coaching and on-demand modules ensure that even educators in rural communities can access high-quality training. These efforts create a culture of continuous growth and shared responsibility for literacy outcomes.

Maine also recognizes that literacy begins long before a child enters school. The Rising Tide Initiative equips families with tools and knowledge to support early reading development.

Read-at-Home Literacy Toolkits, complete with multilingual resources and conversation guides, will be distributed statewide as part of this PDG B-5 project work. Partnerships with 257 public libraries will extend this support, creating a network where families can access books and guidance to nurture a love of reading at home.

The Maine team has built sustainability into the system. Literacy improvement is embedded in district and school planning processes, and instructional leadership teams mentor peers to ensure that gains endure beyond the life of any single initiative. By integrating literacy across all disciplines including science, social studies, and the arts, out plan positions reading and writing as essential skills for civic engagement and workforce readiness.

Through these coordinated efforts, Maine will transform evidence-based literacy instruction from an aspiration into a reality. Policies, PD, family engagement, and leadership structures will work in concert to create a unified system that supports every child's right to read. This is not a series of isolated programs; it is a statewide movement grounded in research, sustained by collaboration, and driven by the belief that literacy opens the door to opportunity.

Children in Foster Care: Access to Child Care, Head Start, and PreK

The OCFS Child Welfare Education policy states that children in care deserve to have an educational experience that is designed to meet their intellectual, educational, developmental, social and well-being needs. The Education policy further states that infants and young children require stability in all areas of their lives, including ECE settings. Young children that have experienced adverse childhood experiences have a critical need for continuity of care and quality care.

When a young child is removed from their home and/or is in foster care, OCFS works to preserve their current child care, Head Start, or public PreK placement. If the child is not in an

ECE program and that need is identified after coming into care, OCFS staff take steps to ensure access to quality ECE. Child care tuition is covered by the state while children are in foster care. In addition, Maine Head Start and Early Head Start programs prioritize enrollment for children in foster care. This is also a priority population for other ECE programs in Maine, including the Child Care Affordability Program, ECE Consultation for ME, and Help Me Grow Maine. As part of our systems building work in this grant period, Maine will intentionally prioritize children in foster care for access to high quality mixed-delivery ECE settings, ensuring representation at regional Action Labs and using local experiences from families to develop and highlight strategies that promote and prioritize access to ECE for children in foster care.

Child Nutrition: Maine's CACFP and School Meals for All PreK-12 Universal Access

School Meals for All is a state program that provides free breakfast and lunch to all public-school students, regardless of family income. This universal program eliminates stigma, ensures access to nutritious meals for all students, and aims to combat child hunger by providing meals as a basic educational tool. The current PDG Leadership Team is working with a team from Maine DOE's child nutrition office and DHHS's child care licensing office to determine the best method for extending School Meals for All to children receiving their public Pre-K education at off-site community partnership sites. The National School Lunch Program does not currently allow schools to receive reimbursement for meals provided at off-site locations. Head Start programs, partnering with schools to provide public Pre-K education for 4-year-olds, are successfully providing meals through Child and Adult Care Food Program (CACFP) to students in their partnership programs. However, partnering child care programs vary in their participation in CACFP and their ability to provide meals to children in their programs. For this reason, hundreds of public Pre-K students are not receiving the free school meals they are

entitled to receive under our state’s universal meals program as public school students. The team is looking at how the state can leverage CACFP and/or the school meals program to address this challenge and promote food security by ensuring that public Pre-K students participating in partnership child care sites can receive free school meals.

Project timeline and milestones

Maine has an ambitious project timeline, building upon existing work, meeting cadence, and established workgroups to accelerate completion of project deliverables. A high-level outline of project activity timelines and milestones is included in Table 13.

Table 13. Project timeline and milestones

Grant Activities and Tasks	December 2025 – March 2026				April – June 2026			July – Sept 2026			October – December 2026		
	Dec	Jan	Feb	Mar	April	May	June	July	Aug	Sept	Oct	Nov	Dec
CRITICAL ELEMENT 1													
Leadership and Governance													
Subtasks:													
RACI Established			x	x	x								
Maine Children’s Cabinet Charter										x	x		
Update Statewide ECE Needs Assessment	x	x	x	x	x	x	x	x	x				
OCFS Market Rate Survey								x	x	x			
Additional data sets (Head Start, SAU FAPE data)	x	x	x	x	x	x	x	x	x	x			
Disaggregated Data to inform gaps											x	x	x
Milestone: Aggregate Data Analysis and Gap Assessment										x	x	x	
Update Strategic Plan and Shared Vision	x	x	x	x	x	x	x	x	x	x	x	x	x
Subtasks:													
Map existing state ECE strategic plans	x	x	x	x	x								
Consultant-driven Road Map assessment			x	x	x	x	x	x	x				
Data Dashboard for strategic plan progress and accountability (monthly updates)			x	x	x	x	x	x	x	x	x	x	x
Draft for stakeholder validation										x	x	x	
Milestone: Strategic Plan and Shared Vision Finalized											x	x	x
CRITICAL ELEMENT 2													
Promote mixed-delivery ECE community partnerships							x	x	x	x	x	x	x
Subtasks:													
Identify SAU regions for hosting Action Labs		x	x	x	x	x	x	x	x				
Work with Head Start, Child Care and Help Me Grow partners to recruit for community Action Lab workshops		x	x	x	x	x	x	x	x				
Milestone: Action Labs Launch			x			x			x				

Grant Activities and Tasks	December 2025 – March 2026				April – June 2026			July – Sept 2026			October – December 2026		
	Dec	Jan	Feb	Mar	April	May	June	July	Aug	Sept	Oct	Nov	Dec
In the Neighborhood Family Engagement Guide							Draft				Edits		Final
The Basics messaging dissemination		x	x	x	x	x	x	x	x	x	x	x	x
Milestone: State Pre-K Roadmap delivered to and approved by Children’s Cabinet											Draft	Edits	Final
Pilot a Unified ECE Workforce PDN		x	x	x	x	x	x	x	x	x	x	x	x
Subtasks:													
PDN pilot plan			x	x	x	x	x	x					
Data sharing agreements						x	x	x	x				
Launch pilot									x	x	x		
Milestone: Analyze PDN Pilot outcomes and make recommendations to Children’s Cabinet											x	x	x
Shared Professional Learning													
Subtasks:													
Regulated Classroom training and coaching					x	x	x						
Literacy								x	x	x			
Family Engagement											x	x	x
Numeracy										x	x	x	x
Milestone: Aligned PD Calendar		Draft	Publish										
Promote Seamless Access for Maine Families		x	x	x	x	x	x	x	x	x	x	x	x
Subtasks:													
Help Me Grow and Head Start FSW facilitation of single access design		x	x	x	x	x	x						
Help Me Grow promotion of Part B and Part C access								x	x	x	x	x	x
The Basics dissemination and promotion													
Milestone: Single access plan development delivered to Maine Children’s Cabinet			Action Lab input				Action Lab input			Action Lab input	Draft	Edits	Final plan

Grant Activities and Tasks	December 2025 – March 2026				April – June 2026			July – Sept 2026			October – December 2026		
	Dec	Jan	Feb	Mar	April	May	June	July	Aug	Sept	Oct	Nov	Dec
Align or Share Information and Data Systems	x	x	x	x	x	x	x	x	x	x	x	x	x
Subtasks:													
Finalize data sharing agreements	x	x	x	x	x	x	x						
API prototype design	x	x	x	x	x	x	x						
Technical documentation complete											x	x	x
Pilot Head Start data integration								x	x				
Full integration of workforce data								x	x				
ECIDS dashboard launched										x	x	x	x
Milestone: Launch pilot use case									x	x	x		
Pilot Use Case feedback to inform plan											x	x	
Milestone: Integrated ECE Data System plan													x
CRITICAL ELEMENT 3													
Collect baseline data via updated needs assessment	x	x	x	x	x	x	x						
Integrate additional data sources (Head Start, FAPE, etc.)	x	x	x	x	x	x	x			x			x
Assess project impact and results				x			x			x			x
Progress Monitoring													
Quarterly cross-agency finance team meetings				x			x			x			x
Quarterly progress updates				x			x			x			x
ECE Mixed-Delivery Workgroup meetings	x	x	x	x	x	x	x	x	x	x	x	x	x
Children’s Cabinet meetings		x		x			x		x			x	
Monthly CCECAC meetings	x	x	x	x	x	x	x	x	x	x	x	x	x

Organizational capacity

The Maine DOE, as the Governor's designated state entity, will administer the PDG B-5 Systems-Building Grant in partnership with OCFS, GOPIF, the Maine Children's Cabinet and its Early Childhood Advisory Council. This structure ensures strong governance, accountability, and alignment with Maine's statewide ECE vision.

Organizational Framework. The PDG B-5 award will operate within Maine's existing cross-agency governance structure anchored by the Children's Cabinet and its ECECAC. This framework provides the authority and capacity to integrate fragmented ECE policies and funding streams into one unified system. Key components include:

Children's Cabinet: Brings together commissioner and cabinet level ECE representation. Chaired by the Governor's Office and comprised of Commissioners from DOE, DHHS, Labor, Public Safety, and Corrections. Houses the CCECAC, Maine's State Advisory Council. The Cabinet meets monthly and provides final decision-making authority for PDG activities.

PDG Leadership Team: Includes senior staff from DOE, OCFS, GOPIF, and the Head Start Collaboration Office. This team meets weekly to oversee implementation, monitor progress, and ensure alignment with PDG B-5 priorities. The PDG Leadership team will regularly consult with Megan Welter, Associate Commissioner of Public Education, and Sandy Flacke, Deputy Director Special Services/619 Coordinator to ensure coordination for all PDG B-5 activities related to mixed-delivery Pre-K programming for children with disabilities and coordination of ECSE.

Mixed Delivery Working Group: A cross-sector team of DOE, OCFS, Head Start grantees, and community partners inform strategies for expanding access through mixed-delivery partnerships.

An annotated organizational chart illustrates these relationships and decision-making pathways ([see Figure 1: Maine ECE System Governance Structure](#)).

Experience and Expertise. Together, Maine DOE and DHHS have a proven track record of successfully managing PDG B-5 grants and related federal and state initiatives. Under the 2024 PDG Renewal Grant, Maine:

- Completed a statewide needs assessment and strategic plan.
- Advanced development of the Early Childhood Integrated Data System
- Implemented governance and financing alignment through the Children’s Cabinet

Maine DOE and OCFS have extensive experience in fiscal oversight, procurement, and compliance with federal regulations (2 CFR 200). The PDG Leadership Team includes staff with expertise in ECE policy, Head Start integration, data systems, and family engagement. Maine’s HSCO ensures full integration of Head Start services and funding into governance and accountability structures.

Maine DOE’s Early Learning Team (EL) will lead the PDG B-5 systems building work. The EL team led the implementation of Maine’s initial PDG and will continue to work closely with DHHS to ensure cross-agency collaboration on Maine’s B-5 Systems grant. DOE has an existing PDG Grant Manager who will provide oversight for the grant’s activities, oversee, execute, and manage subawards and MOUs. The PDG Grant Manager reports to the Director of EL, who supervises the work of the EL Team and has had extensive experience with grant management, including Maine’s \$20 million Reading First grant, Literacy for ME initiative, and prior Pre-K Expansion grant. Maine’s HSCO is housed in Maine DOE’s EL.

Maine DHHS currently administers our PDG Expansion Grant and the Child Care Development Fund Block Grant (CCDBG) which funds Maine’s Quality Rating and

Improvement System, Children’s Licensing and Investigation Services, MRTQ PDN, and child care subsidy program. The State Child Care Administrator, who oversees CCDBG activities, is also responsible for the state funds that support Head Start. The State Child Care Administrator is overseen by the Associate Director of Early Care and Education which allows for seamless implementation of the PDG B-5 activities.

Capacity to Manage Funds. DOE will serve as the fiscal agent and maintain responsibility for all grant funds. The PDG Grant Manager, supported by contracted administrative staff, will oversee day-to-day operations, reporting, and compliance. Maine has struggled to expend prior PDG funds within the grant period due to a large, overly ambitious scope of work and a lack of administrative contracting support. In response, Maine has narrowed its proposal focus to activities that build on existing efforts and can be easily completed within the 12-month grant period. The state has also established financial systems, and internal controls supported via additional contracted support to ensure timely drawdown and accurate reporting. In addition, since our last PDG award, DOE and DHHS finance teams have established quarterly meetings to assess expenditures, analyze spending activity compared to budget, and ensure timely and responsible stewardship of PDG funding. Maine is thoughtful about its spending, making sure that the amounts invested in ECE activities are reasonable, aligned with the state’s vision, and offer a solid return on the investment of state and federal funds.

Overview of PDG 2025 Obligated Funds and Liquidation. The \$6,058,530.42 remaining in Maine’s 2025 PDG funds (see Table 14) have been obligated to personnel, contracts, travel, supplies and materials, other, and indirect costs. Final expenses are being incurred in December 2025, and the funds will be liquidated over the next few months. Maine will be spending and liquidating:

- \$327,427 for DHHS and DOE Personnel
- \$1,667,160.33 for DHHS Contracts
- \$2,398,768.09 For DOE Contracts
- \$7,000 for Travel
- \$1,100 for Supplies
- \$900,075 for Other (grants to child care programs in December)
- \$124,586 for Other (final expenses for events, conferences, projects, etc.)
- \$632,414 for Indirect

Table 14. DHHS 2023-2025 Three-Year Summary (as of 11.21.25)

F2023 Grant Awards (12/31/2022-12/31/2023)		F2024 Grant Awards (12/31/2023- 12/31/2024)		F2025 Grant Awards (12/31/2024- 12/31/2025)	
Budgeted Transfer to DOE	\$2,446,963.00	Budgeted Transfer to DOE	\$3,046,700.00	Budgeted Transfer to DOE	\$3,046,700.00
Budgeted Transfer to GOPIF	\$312,983.00	Budgeted Transfer to GOPIF	\$312,983.00	Budgeted Transfer to GOPIF	\$312,983.00
OCFS Award Amount	\$5,240,054.00	SFY24 Total OCFS Allotment	\$4,640,317.00	SFY25 Total OCFS Allotment	\$4,640,317.00
	\$8,000,000.00		\$8,000,000.00		\$8,000,000.00
Deobligation	\$(6,970,870.11)	Carryover from Year 1	\$6,970,870.11	Carryover from Year 2	\$(5,451,594.00)
		Deobligation	\$(5,451,594.00)		
F2023 Grant Awards Total	\$1,029,129.89	F2024 Grant Awards Total	\$9,519,276.11	F2025 Grant Awards Total	\$13,451,594.00
F2023 Transfers	\$286,326.36	F2024 Transfers	\$2,498,905.22	F2025 Transfers	\$1,556,548.60
Expenditures	\$22,083.17	Expenditures	\$1,153,619.56	Expenditures	\$1,199,965.13
Dicap Charged	\$30,242.69	Dicap Charged	\$116,998.26	Dicap Charged	\$111,001.78
Paid Encumbrances	\$567,752.33	Paid Encumbrances	\$5,135,787.90	Paid Encumbrances	\$4,000,441.88
Personal Services	\$122,725.34	Personal Services	\$613,965.17	Personal Services	\$525,106.19
F2023 Total	\$1,029,129.89	F2024 Total	\$9,519,276.11	F2025 Total	\$7,393,063.58
F2023 Balance	-	F2024 Balance	-	F2025 Balance	\$6,058,530.42

Subaward Management. Maine anticipates subawards to key partners for specialized activities (e.g., facilitation of shared vision and strategic plan, Action Labs, technical assistance for ECIDS data integration pilot) [see line-item budget](#) description for details on work scopes. All subrecipients will have Employer Identification Numbers (EIN) and will comply with federal requirements. DOE will execute formal agreements and monitor subrecipient performance through quarterly reports and review. The terms of the work for each subaward will also be detailed in a memorandum of understanding that outlines specific scopes of work and deliverable timelines. The PDG Grant Manager will monitor deliverable schedules and contracting requirements across the 12-month project, using quarterly state financial meetings to identify and mitigate any barriers to spending down funds and meeting grant deliverables.

Plan for oversight of federal funds and activities

Maine DOE will be responsible for the overall grant administration, relying on the PDG Grant Manager and contracted administrative support to oversee the relevant work, ensure timely project execution, make decisions about the day-to-day operations related to grant activities, and provide fiscal oversight. The DOE grant manager will report directly to senior staff in the DOE EL Team. Senior staff in OCFS and the EL Team will work directly with the designated Children's Cabinet staff to support the implementation of programming, coordination across state agencies and keep the Children's Cabinet abreast of the implementation of the PDG B-5 grant including progress of each activity, challenges to implementation, and any changes to the direction of the grant. The Children's Cabinet will be the final decision-makers for any changes in the direction of the grant. The CCECAC will advise the Children's Cabinet in the assessment, planning, and implementation of grant activities.

Maine DOE and its affiliate agencies entrust the accounting component of grant administration to its Financial Service Center (FSC) positioned under the Maine Department of Administrative and Financial Services (DAFS). The FSC is staffed by accounting and finance professionals. As a division of DAFS, the FSC functions as an independent financial intermediary for all federal grants. Each federal grant is set-up with unique coding, budgetary structures, and internal controls in Maine's comprehensive accounting system (Advantage). This allows individual grant funding to be encumbered, tracked, monitored, and reconciled in detail.

Disbursements go through escalating levels of sign-off, which include management approvals, as well as approval from the Office of the State Controller (OSC). The OSC and the FSC are subject to annual audits from multiple entities, inclusive of internal audit groups, as well as the Office of the State Auditor, who performs the annual Single State Audit. Audits test and evaluate internal controls, from grant award and set-up to administration and sub-recipient monitoring, including compliance with Treasury-State Agreement (TSA) and Cash Management Improvement Act (CMIA).

Project sustainability plan

Maine's approach to sustainability ensures that the strategies, governance structures, and system improvements initiated under the PDG B-5 Systems-Building Grant will endure beyond the one-year project period. Our plan focuses on embedding successful practices into state policy, leveraging existing funding streams, and maintaining cross-agency collaboration.

Governance and leadership. Children's Cabinet and CCECAC will continue as Maine's operational State Advisory Council, providing oversight and accountability for early childhood initiatives. The Cabinet's charter and operating protocols, developed during the grant period, will remain in effect and guide decision-making beyond the life of the grant. In addition, Maine has

been accepted into Early Childhood Governance and Finance Project (supported by the Early Childhood Funders Collaborative). The time period for this work is January 2026 through December 2027. This work will be done in collaboration with PDG B-5 grant activities and will help Maine sustain its PDG B-5 governance work beyond the PDG B-5 grant period.

Policy integration. Strategies piloted under PDG such as single-entry family access, unified PDN, and ECIDS enhancements will be retained in state policy and administrative rules.

Updates to Chapter 124 (Public Pre-K Approval Standards) will align expectations for mixed-delivery partnership models with public Pre-K standards, supporting consistency and long-term collaboration between schools, Head Start, and child care providers.

Financing and resource alignment. Maine will braid and align existing funding streams (CCDF, state Head Start supplemental funds, public Pre-K allocations) to sustain core activities initiated under PDG B-5. The Children’s Cabinet will incorporate PDG B-5 strategies into its biennial budget recommendations and explore the option of using state appropriations for key positions (e.g., Pre-K Partnership Specialist, Early Childhood School-Community Specialist, HMG Resource Specialist) and system infrastructure. Public-private partnerships will be leveraged to maintain family engagement initiatives and PD offerings.

Workforce and Professional Development. The unified PDN pilot will inform permanent integration of training verification and enrollment systems across sectors. OCFS will continue funding PDN through CCDF quality dollars and will extend the work of PDN to align career pathways and training verification and include professional roles for early elementary (K-3) educators in the system. This ensures a seamless birth to age eight PDN for the full ECE workforce in Maine. In addition, Maine’s Literacy and Numeracy Action Plans, part of DOE’s

statewide instructional improvement strategy, will include ongoing professional learning opportunities for ECE educators.

Data and Accountability. ECIDS development will continue under Maine’s Office of Information Technology and DOE/DHHS data governance structures. The integrated data system will support longitudinal analysis and inform policy decisions beyond the grant period. The Roadmap assessment tool will be adopted as a standing evaluation framework for tracking system maturity and guiding continuous improvement.

Partnerships and Stakeholder Engagement. Maine will maintain collaboration with Head Start grantees, family engagement organizations, and local mixed-delivery partnerships through existing advisory councils and annual statewide convenings. HMG Maine will continue to serve as the central hub for family access and referral, supported by CCDF funding.

Line-item budget and budget narrative.

Table 15. Line-Item Budget

Category	Cost
Personnel	\$396,886.66
Fringe	\$231,754.72
Travel	\$40,000
Equipment	\$0.00
Supplies	\$37,968
Contractual	\$1,089,484
Construction	\$0.00
Other	\$102,296
Indirect	\$67,247.76
TOTAL	\$1,965,637.14

Personnel & Fringe

Department of Education (DOE)

Note: Maine DOE includes an estimate of funding that would be needed to pay out accrued vacation time should the employee leave their position. These figures are included for each DOE position.

1 FTE Grant Manager at the Statewide Education Specialist job category to manage all grant activities and coordination across agencies for 12 months at **\$140,867.51** including salary (\$90,230.40 annual salary and \$5,820.13 for vacation day pay out and benefits (\$44,816.98).

1 FTE Early Childhood School-Community Specialist at the Education Specialist II job category to support school and community collaboration efforts, including promotion of opportunities for strengthening family engagement and access to Maine's mixed-delivery system for 12 months at **\$128,456.10** including salary (\$72,355.60 annual salary and \$5,924.60 for vacation day pay out) and benefits (\$50,175.90).

1 FTE Pre-K Partnership Specialist at the Education Specialist II job category to support expansion of Maine's mixed-delivery system through cultivation of partnership between schools and licensed community-based providers for provision of public Pre-K and early childhood special education for 12 months at **\$124,708.51** including salary (\$78,312.80 annual salary and \$4,383.93 for vacation day pay out) and benefits (\$42,011.78).

Department of Health and Human Services (DHHS)

1 FTE Help Me Grow Resource Specialist at the Developmental Disabilities Resource Coordinator job category to support family access to the ECE system, including Help Me Grow care coordination and connections for families with infants and toddlers, children with disabilities, and unified referral processes for 12 months at **\$109,987.15** (\$66,476.80 for salary and \$43,510.35 for benefits).

1 FTE Help Me Grow Data and Policy Specialist at the Social Services Program Specialist II job category to support family access to the ECE system, including Help Me Grow referrals and connection to resources, and unified family access coordination efforts for 12 months at **\$124,622.11** (\$73,382.40 for salary and \$51,239.71 for benefits)

Total personnel salary will be \$396,886.66

Total personnel fringe will be \$231,754.72

Total personnel and fringe costs will be **\$628,641.38**

Travel

Costs for out-of-state travel for 6 state positions to attend the grant meeting in Washington, DC for 3 days are estimated at \$10,000 (approximately \$1,700 per person). The travel costs include flights (estimated at \$600/person), hotel stays (\$196 government rate per night per person), per diem (\$92/day per person), airport parking (\$14/day per person), mileage reimbursement at \$.56 per mile (average of 100 miles round trip to airport per person), and taxi/Uber fares of \$80 per person for airport/hotel transfers.

Costs for out-of-state travel for 3 staff to attend 3 ECDataLab conferences are estimated at \$15,000 (\$1,700 per person per trip) using the same estimations as provided for attendance the Washington, DC trip (above).

Maine budgets \$3,000 per year for in-state travel for state positions, totaling \$15,000 for the 5 state positions. In-state travel for all personnel will be reimbursed at per diem rates (Maine's standard rate is currently \$.56 per mile, \$68 per day for food, and \$110/night for hotel stays).

Total travel costs will be \$40,000.

Supplies

IT costs are estimated at **\$28,968** based on \$4,228/person for computers and \$600/person for cell phone for the 5 state positions plus the 1 contracted administrative assistant.

Office and other consumable supplies for state personnel for 12 months are estimated at \$1,500 per person per year, totaling **\$9,000** for the 5 state positions plus the 1 contracted administrative assistant.

Total supply costs will be \$37,968.

Contractual

Seven sole-source contractual agreements will be established: 1) RMC Research; 2) Maine Roads to Quality; 3) Tri-State; 4) Katherine Johnston Consulting; 5) Regulated Classroom; 6) ECDataLabs; and 7) Maine Association for the Education of Young Children.

Four contractual agreements will be procured: 8) Community Mixed-Delivery mini-grants; 9) Emergent Literacy trainers; 10) Family Engagement trainers; 11) Numeracy Professional Learning trainers.

Contract 1: RMC Research

Total Cost: \$73,000.00

Contract with RMC Research to conduct enhanced needs assessment activities, strategic plan development, and facilitation of Road Map gap analysis. The contract will support 35 days of work at a rate of \$2,000 per day (in line with current market rates and previous contracts with this vendor) as well as \$3,000 to support travel costs associated with attending in-person meetings.

***Contract 2: Maine Roads to Quality (MRTQ)**

Total Cost: \$250,000.00

Contract with Maine Roads to Quality for technical assistance to support dissemination of quality improvement awards to licensed child care programs. \$200,000 is included for incentive payments to support child care programs to improve quality of programs with specific attention to improvements necessary to move from Star 2 to Star 3 or higher ratings required to serve as approved settings for early childhood education and public Pre-K. This is based on an estimate of \$5,000-10,000 each for 25-30 child care programs. \$50,000 is included for Maine Roads to Quality staffing support indirect costs.

Contract 3: Tri-State Services

Total Cost: \$42,484.00

Contract for administrative assistant position to support PDG Grant Manager for 20 hours a week at rate of \$40.85/hr. (\$25/hr. for salary plus \$15.85/hr. for benefits and indirect).

Contract 4: Katherine Johnston Consulting**Total Cost: \$10,000**

Contract for data consultant through a low-cost service contract of not more than \$10,000 to conduct a statewide child care gap analysis.

Contract 5: Regulated Classroom**Total Cost: \$124,000**

Contract to support 80 educators in 2-day Regulated Classroom train the trainer model at rate of \$1,550 per educator.

#Contract 6: ECDataLab**Total Cost: \$300,000.00**

Contract for the ECDataLab team to provide coaching and technical assistance Maine's ECIDS team to build capacity and the analytical tools to support policy makers to access key early childhood integrated data. Coaching support and technical assistance include the provision of nine recurring virtual co-development sessions, three in-person two-day gatherings and nine asynchronous self-study modules. At least ten hours of dedicated technical assistance hours will also provide teams with direct, hands-on time for work, overcoming challenges and accelerating implementation of the dashboard.

Contract 7: Maine AEYC*Total Cost: \$40,000**

Contract to support workshop sessions provision at Maine's Statewide Early Childhood Conference (\$10,000) and to support attendance of participants from a variety of ECE perspectives (e.g., Career and Technical Education, Head Start, Child Care, public Pre-K, etc.) (\$30,000). Workshop sessions will be designed to gather input on Maine's Early Childhood System vision.

Contract 8: Community Mixed-delivery Mini Grants**Total Cost: \$200,000**

Mini-grants of up to \$10,000 per community to support 20 communities with facilitation support, technical assistance, and leadership team activities to build coordinated mixed-delivery system approaches to meet the needs of families and increase access to quality early care and education settings. Learnings from community work will inform the state's ECE vision and coordinated governance.

Contract 9: Emergent Literacy Trainers**Total Cost: \$20,000**

Contracts to support 2 trainers (\$5,000 per trainer) in preparing 20 trainees in conducting Emergent Literacy PLCs in 20 sites (\$500 per site) across the state to build ECE professionals' knowledge and skill with emergent literacy strategies using the IES Emergent Literacy Modules.

Contract 10: Family Engagement Trainers**Total Cost: \$10,000**

Contract to support stipends for Head Start Family Service Coordinators to design and deliver professional learning in Family Engagement strategies for community-based ECE providers. Rate based on \$25/hr. stipends for 400 hours of work in design and delivery.

Contract 11: Numeracy Professional Learning **Total Cost: \$20,000**

Contract to support provision of professional learning in early numeracy to ECE professionals. Estimation based on delivery of 4 regionally located professional learning sessions at a cost of \$5,000 per session for up to 50 participants per session.

*Contracts which will be executed by Maine’s Department of Health and Human Services
#Contracts which will be executed by the Governor’s Office of Policy, Innovation, and the Future

Total contractual costs will be: **\$1,089,484**

Other

\$10,000 is included for the 2 State Cross-Agency ECE Summit gatherings (\$5,000 per summit) to support the needs assessment and strategic plan updates. This will cover costs associated with venue rentals to accommodate 100-125 attendees, speaker stipends, and stipends for parents invited to attend either or both summits.

\$92,296 is included for a systems team leader and a systems analyst in the Maine Office of Information Technology (OIT) for building out of analytics and code, integrating the data, and creating the data visualization and dashboard associated with the ECDataLab to support Maine’s Early Childhood Integrated Data System. Funding will also cover database and tableau services.

Total other costs will be **\$102,296.**

Total Direct Costs will be \$1,898,389.38

Indirect Costs

Indirect costs represent the expenses of doing business that are not readily identified with a particular grant, contract, project function, or activity, but are necessary for the general operation of the organization and the conduct of activities it performs. An indirect cost rate is a mechanism for determining fairly and conveniently within the boundaries of sound administrative principle, what proportions of an organization’s administrative costs each program should bear. Rates are subject to the regulations issued by the Office of Management and Budget Uniform Administrative Requirements, Cost Principles, and Audit Requirements for Federal Awards under 2 CFR 200. The United States Department of Education’s Indirect Cost Division is responsible for approving indirect cost rates for recipients based on an indirect cost proposal submission, and the Maine Department of Education’s current approved indirect cost rate is 6.6%. This rate is applied to salaries, benefits, travel, supplies, and contracts. For contracts, indirect costs are only charged up to \$25,000. For example, if a contract is for \$100,000, indirect will only be applied to \$25,000 of that \$100,000.

Total indirect costs will be **\$67,247.76**

Total Federal Budget: \$1,965,637.14

State Match: \$700,000 (30% of the federal award)

The Office of Child and Family Services will contribute **\$700,000** from the state-funded ECE Workforce Salary Supplement Program which provides tiered salary stipends associated with status on the Maine’s ECE Career Lattice to child care staff working in state licensed settings.

Memorandums of Understanding (MOUs). Although the Maine DOE will be the lead applicant, this agency will work collaboratively with Maine DHHS and GOPIF to execute contracts associated with approved grant activities and to support funding of two positions at Maine DHHS. To facilitate this collaboration, Maine DOE will establish MOUs with both Maine DHHS and GOPIF which will outline how the funds will be shared, for what purposes, and how fiscal oversight will be accomplished. MOUs will be executed within 45 days of grant receipt.

Table 16. Cost by Critical Element

Critical Element	Total Cost	
	Grant (including indirect)	State Match
Critical Element 1: Statewide ECE Needs Assessment and Strategic Plan	\$ 177,244.87	\$200,000.00
Critical Element 2: Outcome Strategies to Advance Program Priorities	\$0.00	\$0.00
Outcome Strategy 1: Reconcile fragmented elements into a unified system	\$1,257,809.70	\$500,00.00
Outcome Strategy 2: Expand program availability and sustainability	\$0.00	\$0.00
Outcome Strategy 3: Align or share information and data systems	\$450,659.20	\$0.00
Critical Element 3: Tracking Project Impact	\$79,923.37	\$0.00
TOTAL	\$1,965,637.14	\$700,00.00

Critical Element 1. Estimated costs for this element include a portion of the PDG Grant Manager and administrative assistant’s time, travel, and supply budgets, contracted support from RMC Research for updating the needs assessment and strategic plan as well as technical assistance support for completing the Roadmap Analysis, and contracted support for a data analyst to update the child care gap analysis. Additionally, funding to support two summits for state ECE staff and to support Maine’s statewide ECE conference is included to enable integration of a variety of perspectives in the enhancement of Maine’s strategic plan and development of Maine’s ECE vision. Maine’s matching funds come from the state’s Early Childhood Workforce Salary Supplement program. Because gap analysis activities to update the state needs assessment and strategic plan includes integration of Maine’s Early Childhood Workforce Salary Supplement Program Evaluation data, Maine will apply \$200,000 of the state match funding to Critical Element #1.

Critical Element 2

Outcome Strategy #1: Estimated costs include salary, benefits, and operational costs for the Early Childhood School-Community Specialist, Pre-K Partnership Specialist, Help ME Grow Resource Specialist, and Help Me Grow Data and Policy Special positions who will be conducting activities outlined in the project narrative. A portion of the PDG Grant Manager’s and Administrative Assistant’s time and operational costs are included to support activities associated with this Outcome Strategy. Contracts with Maine Roads to Quality for quality

improvement activities, mini-grants for community teams to strengthen ECE mixed-delivery efforts, and funding to support professional learning to strengthen the ECE workforce are also included. Maine will apply \$500,000 of state matching funds to activities in Critical Element #1: Outcome Strategy #2 which both include professional learning and development for Maine's ECE workforce.

Outcome Strategy #3: Estimated costs include funding to support Maine's continued technical buildout of its ECIDS as well as participation in the ECDataLab. A portion of the PDG Grant Manager's and Administrative Assistant's time and operational costs are included to support activities associated with this Outcome Strategy.

Critical Element #3

Estimated costs in this element include a portion of the PDG Grant Manager's and Administrative Assistant's time and operational costs are included to support activities associated with tracking project implementation effectiveness. The PDG Grant Manager will work with the PDG Leadership Team to monitor timelines, track implementation, and gather data related to project outcomes.

Proprietary or personally identifiable information

Maine has not included any salary or other proprietary information, or personally identifiable information in its application.

**INDIRECT COST RATE AGREEMENT
STATE EDUCATION AGENCY**

Organization:

Maine Department of Education
23 State House Station
Augusta, ME 04333-0023

Date: November 24, 2025

Agreement No: 2024-108(B)

Filing Reference: This replaces previous Agreement No. 2024-108 (A)
Dated: 7/10/2025

The approved indirect cost rates herein are for use on grants, contracts, and other agreements with the Federal Government. The rates are subject to the conditions included in Section II of this Agreement and regulations issued by the Office of Management and Budget (OMB) Uniform Administrative Requirements, Cost Principles, and Audit Requirements for Federal Awards under 2 CFR 200.

Section I - Rates and Bases

<u>Type</u>	<u>From</u>	<u>To</u>	<u>Rate</u>	<u>Base</u>	<u>Applicable To</u>
Fixed	7/1/2024	6/30/2025	13.0%	MTDC	Unrestricted
Fixed	7/1/2024	6/30/2025	7.5%	MTDC	Restricted
Provisional	7/1/2025	1/31/2026	7.1%	MTDC	Unrestricted
Provisional	7/1/2025	1/31/2026	6.6%	MTDC	Restricted

Distribution Base:

MTDC Modified Total Direct Cost - Total direct costs excluding equipment, capital expenditures, participant support costs, pass-through funds and the portion of each subaward (subcontract or subgrant) above \$25,000 (each award; each year).

Applicable To:

Unrestricted Unrestricted rates apply to programs that do not require a restricted rate per 34 CFR 75.563 and 34 CFR 76.563.

Restricted Restricted rates apply to programs that require a restricted rate per 34 CFR 75.563 and 34 CFR 76.563.

Treatment of Fringe Benefits:

Fringe benefits applicable to direct salaries and wages are treated as direct costs. Pursuant to 2 CFR 200.431, (b), (3), Paragraph (i), unused leave costs for all employees are allowable in the year of payment. The treatment of unused leave costs should be allocated as an indirect cost except for those employee salaries designated as a direct cost for the restricted rate calculation.

Capitalization Policy: Items of equipment are capitalized and depreciated if the initial acquisition cost is equal to or greater than \$5,000.

Section II – Particulars

Limitations: Application of the rates contained in this Agreement is subject to all statutory or administrative limitations on the use of funds, and payments of costs hereunder are subject to the availability of appropriations applicable to a given grant or contract. Acceptance of the rates agreed to herein is predicated on the following conditions: (A) that no costs other than those incurred by the Organization were included in the indirect cost pools as finally accepted, and that such costs are legal obligations of the Organization and allowable under the governing cost principles; (B) the same costs that have been treated as indirect costs are not claimed as direct costs; (C) that similar types of information which are provided by the Organization, and which were used as a basis for acceptance of rates agreed to herein, are not subsequently found to be materially incomplete or inaccurate; and (D) that similar types of costs have been accorded consistent accounting treatment.

Accounting Changes: The rates contained in this agreement are based on the organizational structure and the accounting systems in effect at the time the proposal was submitted. Changes in organizational structure or changes in the method of accounting for costs which affect the amount of reimbursement resulting from use of the rates in this agreement, require the prior approval of the responsible negotiation agency. Failure to obtain such approval may result in subsequent audit disallowance.

Provisional/Final/Predetermined Rates: A proposal to establish a final rate must be submitted. The awarding office should be notified if the final rate is different from the provisional rate so that appropriate adjustments to billings and charges may be made. Predetermined rates are not subject to adjustment.

Fixed Rate: The negotiated fixed rate is based on an estimate of the costs that will be incurred during the period to which the rate applies. When the actual costs for such period have been determined, an adjustment will be made to a subsequent rate calculation to compensate for the difference between the costs used to establish the fixed rate and the actual costs.

Notification to Other Federal Agencies: Copies of this document may be provided to other Federal agencies as a means of notifying them of the agreement contained herein.

Audit: All costs (direct and indirect, federal and non-federal) are subject to audit. Adjustments to amounts resulting from audit of the cost allocation plan or indirect cost rate proposal upon which the negotiation of this agreement was based may be compensated for in a subsequent negotiation.

Reimbursement Ceilings/Limitations on Rates: Awards that include ceiling provisions and statutory/regulatory requirements on indirect cost rates or reimbursement amounts are subject to the stipulations in the grant or contract agreements. If a ceiling is higher than the negotiated rate in Section I of this agreement, the negotiated rate will be used to determine the maximum allowable indirect cost.

Section III - Special Remarks

Alternative Reimbursement Methods: If any federal programs are reimbursing indirect costs by a methodology other than the approved rates in this agreement, such costs should be credited to the programs and the approved rates should be used to identify the maximum amount of indirect costs allocable.

Submission of Proposals: New indirect cost proposals are necessary to obtain approved indirect cost rates for future fiscal years. **The next indirect cost rate proposal is due six months prior to the expiration dates of the rates in this agreement.**

Section IV – Approvals

For the State Education Agency:

Maine Department of Education
23 State House Station
Augusta, ME 04333-0023

For the Federal Government:

U.S. Department of Education
OFO / OAM / ICD
400 Maryland Avenue, SW
Washington, DC 20202-4500

DocuSigned by:
Nicole Denis
Signature C29C3F9F3B0A446

Nicole Denis
Name

Director of Finance
Title

11/24/2025
Date

Andre Hylton
Signature

Andre Hylton
Name

Director, Indirect Cost Division
Title

November 24, 2025
Date

Negotiator: Chanell Armstrong
Telephone Number: (202) 987-0989

Certificate Of Completion

Envelope Id: AD007C4C-A9D6-4BB3-8158-87370791FFB6	Status: Completed
Subject: Complete with Docusign: 2024-108(B) - Rate Agreement.pdf	
Source Envelope:	
Document Pages: 3	Signatures: 1
Certificate Pages: 1	Initials: 0
AutoNav: Enabled	Envelope Originator:
Envelopeld Stamping: Enabled	Nicole Denis
Time Zone: (UTC-05:00) Eastern Time (US & Canada)	Nicole.L.Denis@maine.gov
	IP Address: 45.46.16.196

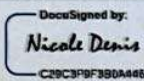
Record Tracking

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11/24/2025 4:17:20 PM	Nicole.L.Denis@maine.gov	
Security Appliance Status: Connected	Pool: StateLocal	
Storage Appliance Status: Connected	Pool: Maine Department of Education	Location: Docusign

Signer Events

Nicole Denis
 Nicole.L.Denis@maine.gov
 Director of Finance
 Carahsoft OBO Maine Department of Education
 Security Level: Email, Account Authentication (None)

Signature



DocuSigned by:
Nicole Denis
 C29C3F9F380A465

Signature Adoption: Pre-selected Style
 Using IP Address: 45.46.16.196

Timestamp

Sent: 11/24/2025 4:17:59 PM
 Viewed: 11/24/2025 4:18:06 PM
 Signed: 11/24/2025 4:18:19 PM

Electronic Record and Signature Disclosure:
 Not Offered via Docusign

In Person Signer Events	Signature	Timestamp
Editor Delivery Events	Status	Timestamp
Agent Delivery Events	Status	Timestamp
Intermediary Delivery Events	Status	Timestamp
Certified Delivery Events	Status	Timestamp
Carbon Copy Events	Status	Timestamp
Witness Events	Signature	Timestamp
Notary Events	Signature	Timestamp
Envelope Summary Events	Status	Timestamps
Envelope Sent	Hashed/Encrypted	11/24/2025 4:17:59 PM
Certified Delivered	Security Checked	11/24/2025 4:18:06 PM
Signing Complete	Security Checked	11/24/2025 4:18:19 PM
Completed	Security Checked	11/24/2025 4:18:19 PM
Payment Events	Status	Timestamps



Janet T. Mills
GOVERNOR

STATE OF MAINE
OFFICE OF THE GOVERNOR
1 STATE HOUSE STATION
AUGUSTA, MAINE
04333-0001

December 1, 2025

Richard Gonzales
Administration for Children and Families
U.S. Department of Health and Human Services
330 C Street, SW
Washington, DC 20201

Dear Mr. Gonzales,

I am pleased to submit this letter of commitment for Maine's application for the Preschool Development Grant Birth through Five (PDG B-5) Systems-Building Grant (HHS-2025-ACF-ECD-TP-0016). Maine's Department of Education (DOE) will be responsible for the execution and administration of this grant.

The Department of Education is best suited to oversee and manage this specific grant. The Early Learning Team at the DOE includes staff that oversee: Maine's public preschool programming including partnerships between schools, child care programs and Head Start; the Head Start Collaboration Office; professional learning; and the First Ten Community Schools initiative. Early childhood special education (Part B 619 and Part C) is also based within the Maine DOE. Under this grant application, staff from the Early Learning Team and early childhood special education will lead efforts to coordinate and align early care and education at the local level that will help inform the planning for a more unified and coherent statewide early care and education system. Staff in the Department of Health and Human Services (DHHS) Office of Child and Family Services-Early Care and Education division will partner directly with staff at DOE to ensure the execution and implementation of the grant. Staff from the Governor's Office of Policy Innovation and the Future and the Head Start Collaboration Office will also sit on the PDG Steering Committee and support implementation of the grant.

Maine's Children's Cabinet, comprised of Commissioners from five state agencies including Maine DOE and DHHS, will monitor and serve as the lead governing body overseeing grant implementation, ensuring that initiatives in the project are being implemented in a timely manner. At the direction of the Children's Cabinet, staff from the state agencies, including DHHS and DOE, will work closely to coordinate early care and education programming and policies. Under this grant application, the Cabinet and the PDG Steering Committee will be responsible for leading the work to develop a shared, comprehensive vision for early care and education and efforts to build a more unified, coherent statewide system. Stakeholders from the Children's Cabinet Early Childhood Advisory Council will advise and provide feedback on these efforts.



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I am committed to the successful implementation of this grant. The staff member in the Governor's Office of Policy Innovation and the Future who directs the work of the Children's Cabinet is part of the Preschool Development Grant leadership team. In her role, she will be directly involved in oversight and implementation of this grant. She will keep my senior staff updated on the progress of the PDG project activities on a regular basis. This work can start immediately in 2026 as the positions and activities are aligned with existing initiatives that have legislative and budget approval. The PDG Steering Committee will meet quarterly with the Department of Administrative and Financial Services to review procurement and financial accounting to support spend-down.

This grant will provide a tremendous opportunity for the Children's Cabinet to strengthen and solidify current efforts to unify policies and programs in our early care and education system to better ensure seamless access to quality early childhood education and care for children and their families. Thank you for the opportunity to apply for these important funds.

Sincerely,



Janet T. Mills
Governor



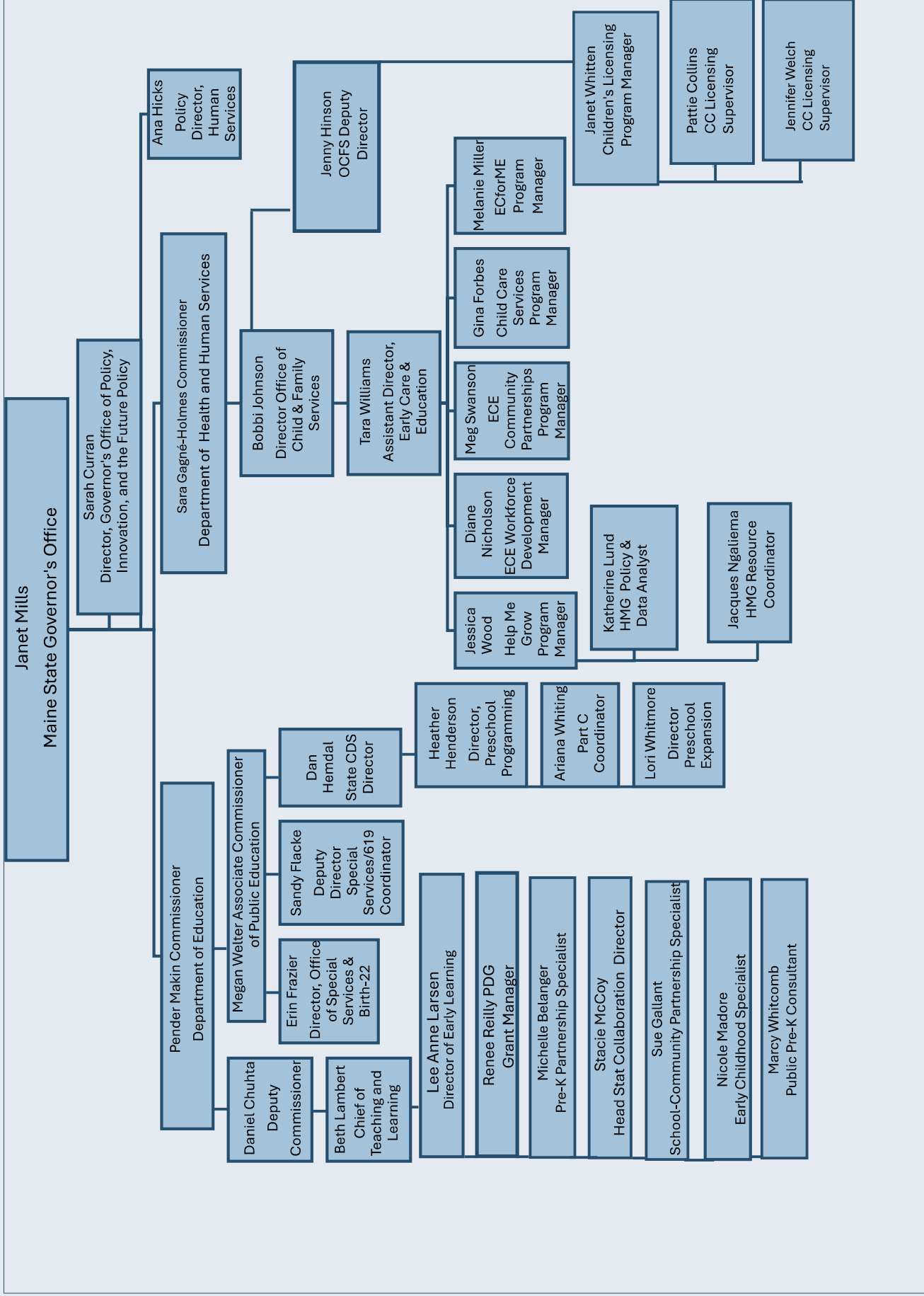
PRINTED ON RECYCLED PAPER

Maine PDG B-5 Supplementary budget information

If additional PDG B-5 funds are available, Maine could accept an additional \$110,000.00 in grant funding. Maine would use the additional funds to increase the number of quality improvement awards to child care and Head Start programs to support readiness for mixed-delivery partnerships (*Critical Element 2, Outcome Strategy 2*), mini-grants for mixed-delivery work and support of children with disabilities receiving services in community programs, (*Critical Element 2, Outcome Strategy 2*), and/or offering additional shared professional learning opportunities in the *Regulated Classroom*[™] or evidence-based literacy and numeracy teaching practices (*Critical Element 2, Outcome Strategy 4*).



State of Maine PDG B-5 Organizational Chart



Janet T. Mills
Governor

Sara Gagné-Holmes
Commissioner



Maine Department of Health and Human Services
Child and Family Services
11 State House Station
2 Anthony Avenue
Augusta, Maine 04333-0011
Tel.: (207) 624-7900; Toll Free: (877) 680-5866
TTY: Dial 711 (Maine Relay); Fax: (207) 287-5282

December 1, 2025

Richard Gonzales
U.S. Department of Health and Human Services
Administration for Children and Families
Office of Early Childhood Development
330 C Street, SW
Washington DC 20201

RE: HHS-2025-ACF-ECD-TP-0016

Dear Mr. Gonzales,

The Maine Department of Health and Human Services is pleased to submit a letter offering our support and partnership for implementation of the Preschool Development Grant Birth through Five (PDG B-5) Systems-Building Grant. This grant provides a tremendous opportunity to capitalize on the successful leadership of the Maine Children's Cabinet and build on the cross-agency staff collaboration that has been strengthened over multiple years of PDG systems work.

The Office of Child and Family Services (OCFS) will support the PDG B-5 Systems-Building Grant by providing \$700,000 in fiscal support as required by the 30 percent matching funds. The match monies will be comprised of state-funded salary stipends that will be provided directly to early childhood educators working in licensed child care programs. The salary stipends will support Maine's work to efficiently layer federal, state, local, and nongovernmental resources for early care and education. This compensation initiative will also help Maine to create and strengthen partnerships in the early care and education (ECE) system that create seamless early learning experiences for young children and their families.

The OCFS Early Care and Education team will partner on several initiatives outlined in the grant, including the development of a statewide vision for ECE and updates to Maine's PDG Needs Assessment and PDG Strategic Plan. This work will result in a statewide ECE Strategic Plan that includes a roadmap for a coherent, aligned system. OCFS staff in Help Me Grow Maine will support family access to early childhood services, from infant and toddler care to Head Start and public PreK. Help Me Grow Maine will lead efforts to plan a roadmap for families to have a single entry point to the ECE system. OCFS will lead the work to reconcile policies and funding streams that move the Maine Roads to Quality Professional Development Network (MRTQ PDN) toward a coordinated PDN for a unified ECE system. OCFS will leverage opportunities through our Head Start state contracts, Help Me Grow Maine family support and referral work,

and MRTQ PDN support for quality child care to maximize family options in early care and education.

We are ready to continue to work closely with our colleagues in the Maine Children's Cabinet and at the Maine Department of Education to ensure that we are building a statewide early care and education system that gives working families more opportunities that match their needs and preferences. Thank you for this opportunity.

Sincerely,

Bobbi K. Johnson, LMSW

Bobbi Johnson
Director
Office of Child and Family Services

Sara Gagné-Holmes

Sara Gagné-Holmes
Commissioner
Maine Department of Health and Human Services

November 24, 2025

Richard Gonzales

Administration for Children and Families, U.S. Department of Health and Human Services
330 C Street, SW
Washington, DC 20201

Dear Mr. Gonzales,

I am writing on behalf of ECDataLab to express strong support for Maine's application for the Preschool Development Grant Birth through Five (PDG B-5) Systems-Building Grant. ECDataLab is a nonprofit organization dedicated to helping states use high-quality data, modern analytics, and applied data analysis to strengthen early childhood systems. Our Analytic Development Cohort is uniquely designed to support states in building sustainable data analysis dashboards and processes for decision-making. These activities align directly with the PDG B-5 priorities.

Commitment and Readiness to Begin in January 2026

We are pleased to confirm that Maine has already been vetted into ECDataLab's Analytic Development Cohort. Selection into the cohort is based on documented prerequisites, demonstrated system readiness, and a competitive application process designed to ensure each state partner is well-positioned for success. With this vetting process complete, Maine is fully prepared to begin cohort activities in January 2026, which aligns precisely with the PDG B-5 period of performance and will support timely, effective implementation of proposed grant activities.

Alignment with PDG B-5 Program Priorities

Participation in the Analytic Development Cohort will help Maine make measurable progress toward the three core program priorities of PDG B-5.

1. Developing a shared, comprehensive statewide vision for ECE

The cohort supports states in building shared metrics, unified analytic routines, and cross-agency data standards that anchor a coordinated statewide vision. Through structured coaching and cross-state learning, the cohort strengthens the analytic foundations that support needs assessments, strategic planning, and unified decision-making.

2. Building a unified, coherent statewide ECE system

ECDataLab is staffed by experts who have supported more than 40 states in integrating data across early childhood programs, including linking data across programs, including

Head Start. This work directly supports PDG B-5 outcome strategies that seek to align policies, streamline operations, modernize technology systems, and integrate Head Start into statewide data integration, and produce responsive dashboards for decision-makers.

3. Maximizing family choice and improving the supply of ECE opportunities

By improving data quality and analytic capacity, the cohort program model equips states to use their data across programs, including Head Start, to understand the current program supply and demand, articulate workforce shortages, identify geographic disparities, and produce analyses that inform coordinated enrollment pathways. These insights support family choice and help states strategically deploy ECE resources across funding streams.

Support for Required Critical Elements

Participation in the cohort will strengthen Maine's ability to meet PDG B-5 requirements related to:

- Critical Element 1: Updating statewide needs assessments with improved unduplicated counts, longitudinal linkages, and more precise analysis of gaps in service.
- Critical Element 2: Implementing outcome strategies that align or integrate information systems, reduce burden, improve interoperability, and incorporate Head Start grantees into unified data efforts.
- Critical Element 3: Tracking project impact through sustainable analytic routines, quality assurance processes, dashboards, and repeatable performance metrics.

Commitment to Partnership and Sustainability

ECDataLab is prepared to begin work with Maine immediately upon PDG B-5 award. Our team will collaborate with the Governor's Office, the designated state lead entity, Head Start partners, and relevant agencies to ensure seamless integration of cohort activities with the state's PDG B-5 strategic vision. Our approach emphasizes capacity-building and sustainability, enabling analytic processes to remain functional and durable beyond the grant period.

Sincerely,



Missy Coffey, PhD
Executive Director
ECDataLab



Maine Head Start Directors Association

Cristina Salois, MS Ed
Southern Kennebec Child Development Corporation
337 Maine Ave Farmingdale, ME 04344
Phone: 207-582-3110 Email: cristina.salois@skcdc.org

The Maine Head Start Directors Association provides this letter of support for the Maine Department of Education application for a FY 2025 Preschool Development Grant Birth Through Five (PDG B-5) Systems-Building Grant.

This grant will provide Maine with the opportunity to further strengthen the Early Care and Education systems in our state. With a focus on quality and partnership, the PDG will move Maine forward as we work together on behalf of young children and their families.

Head Start programs in Maine have a long history of partnership and collaboration with families and communities. All of Maine's Head Start grantees have at least one partnership with the School Administrative Unit in their service area to strengthen the capacity and quality of Public PreK and extended day programming of Maine's mixed delivery system.

We are forward thinking and consistently working to align our program offerings with community needs. The Head Start Collaboration Office plays an important role in ensuring that up-to-date resources and knowledge are shared among the entities that support young families in our state

The Maine Department of Education, along with the Office of Child and Family Services, offer key supports which allow the field to plan strategically, support best practice, and build efficiency into our mixed-delivery system.

Families and children are at the heart of our Head Start programs. Family Services staff in local centers support families in setting goals, moving forward, and ensuring school readiness. Families also play a key role in the governance of Head Start programs, ensuring that parents are part of the decision-making process. Maine Head Start Grantees welcome the opportunity to share and further develop this work as part of the comprehensive PDG plan proposed in this application.

Kind regards,

Cristina Salois, MS Ed

Chair, Maine Head Start Directors Association



Jordan Detwiler-Michelson
Director

207-780-5193
jordan.detwilermichelson@maine.edu



November 25, 2025

To Whom it May Concern:

As the Director of the Maine Roads to Quality Professional Development Network (MRTQ PDN), I am pleased to express our strong support for the Maine Department of Education (DOE) and Maine Office of Child and Family Services' (OCFS) application for the federal Preschool Development Grant. The proposed initiative to provide quality improvement awards to early childhood education programs across Maine aligns directly with our shared commitment to elevating program quality, strengthening the early childhood workforce, and ensuring that all children—particularly those in the birth-to-five years—have access to nurturing, developmentally informed care and learning environments. DOE and OCFS's vision for a coordinated, equitable early childhood system is one we fully endorse, and we believe this investment will meaningfully advance program quality statewide.

MRTQ PDN is well positioned to support the successful implementation of this grant. As Maine's statewide professional development system, we maintain a comprehensive training, technical assistance, and workforce advancement infrastructure that reaches early childhood and out-of-school-time professionals in every region of the state. Our data systems, Quality Rating and Improvement System (QRIS) supports, and established partnerships with providers allow us to deliver targeted coaching, competency-based training, and program-quality supports that align seamlessly with the goals of the proposed quality improvement awards. We are confident that, in collaboration with DOE and OCFS, MRTQ PDN can help ensure that these resources translate into measurable, sustainable improvements in program quality and child outcomes across Maine.

Please do not hesitate to reach out if you should have any questions.

Sincerely,

Jordan Detwiler-Michelson



maineaeyc

Maine Association for the
Education of Young Children

To Whom It May Concern:

On behalf of the Maine Association for the Education of Young Children (MaineAEYC), I am pleased to offer our strong support for the Maine Department of Education and the Department of Health and Human Services as they apply for the federal Preschool Development Grant (PDG). MaineAEYC is committed to strengthening high-quality early childhood education across our state, and we view this grant as a strategic opportunity to invest in solutions that are efficient, sustainable, and rooted in the needs of Maine communities.

One of the most effective, high-impact initiatives supported by this grant is Maine's Statewide Early Childhood Conference, which convenes more than 700 early childhood educators from across the state for two full days of professional development. This conference serves as a cost-effective way to elevate practice, strengthen quality, and ensure alignment with evidence-based approaches that support children and families. By bringing educators together in one setting, we reduce duplication, increase coordination, and maximize the return on every training dollar spent.

High-quality early learning is not only good for children—it is essential for Maine's workforce and economy. Families depend on dependable early care and education in order to work, and employers depend on families. Strengthening educator training and elevating quality standards support parents' ability to choose the settings that best meet their needs while ensuring those settings operate safely, responsibly, and with accountability. In a state where too many communities—especially rural areas—face significant shortages of early childhood programs, targeted investments become even more important to preserve family options, support small child care business owners, and maintain strong community-based options.

The Statewide Early Childhood Conference directly advances these goals. It gives educators practical tools to improve quality, supports program stability, and reduces long-term costs by helping providers implement best practices that mitigate more expensive interventions down the road. These are the types of measured, outcomes-driven solutions that strengthen families, bolster workforce participation, and ensure taxpayer dollars are used efficiently and responsibly.

MaineAEYC is proud to partner with the Maine Department of Education, Maine Department of Health and Human Services, and with Maine's educators statewide in this work. We believe the Preschool Development Grant will provide the flexible, data-informed support necessary to build a stronger, more accountable early childhood system—one that respects family choice, supports local providers, and ensures that children across Maine have access to high-quality early learning opportunities.

Thank you for considering this application. We look forward to continued collaboration in service of Maine's children, families, and workforce.

Sincerely,

Heather Marden, Morgan Tolin

Co-Executive Directors

Maine Association for the Education of Young Children

Maine PDG B-5 Governance Structure

Children's Cabinet Early Childhood Advisory Council
 2 State Senators, 2 State Reps, a Governor's designee, a parent of young children, 2 persons with experience in public funding & philanthropy, 1 person representing child abuse and neglect prevention, 1 person representing postsecondary education, 2 persons representing statewide membership or constituent organization that advance the well-being of young children including a Head Start representative, 1 person representing a business, 1 person with expertise in children's health or public health, 2 DHHS staff members, 2 DOE staff members including the Head Start Collaboration Director

Children's Cabinet Decision Makers
 Commissioners for Health and Human Services, Education, Labor, Corrections and Public Safety

PDG Leadership Team
 • Policy Director, Human Services at the Governor's Office of Policy Innovation and the Future
 • Director of Early Learning at Maine DOE
 • Associate Director of Early Care & Education at DHHS
 • Head Start Collaboration Director
 • PDG Grant Manager

Children's Cabinet Staff:
 GOPIF, DHHS and DOE's Commissioner's Office, OCFS, Early Learning Team, Early Childhood Special Education, Maine CDC, Department of Labor

ECE Mixed Delivery Working Group Staff from DHHS and DOE:
 Public Pre-K, Head Start Collaboration Office, Early Childhood Special Education (Part B and Part C), Child Care Development Fund, Child Care Licensing, ECE Workforce Salary Program, IECMHC, and Help Me Grow Maine

DHHS
 Early Care & Education Team and Child Care Licensing Team
 Office of Child and Family Services
 Senior Staff

DOE
 Early Learning Team
 Early Childhood Special Education Services
 Senior Staff

