

IL Governor's Office of Early Childhood Development (GOECD)
Performance Progress Report - PDG B-5 Renewal Quarter 4
Date: January 29, 2021

Activity 1: Needs Assessment

- 1. Major activities and accomplishments** – In Q4, the Request for Sealed Proposals (RFSP) was finalized with procurement leads.
- 2. Problems** – This project faced delays due to difficulty with the procurement process. The COVID-19 crisis created significant additional capacity constraints, as staff transferred significant capacity to COVID-19 responses. Timing of the delays created complications due to concerns about having enough time in Renewal Grant Year One to finish deliverables per procurement rules, yet at the same time not yet having authorization for funding in Year Two.
- 3. Significant findings and events** – N/A
- 4. Dissemination activities** – N/A
- 5. Other activities** – N/A
- 6. Activities planned for the next reporting period** – Identify project vendor and execute contract for completion of project.

Activity 2: Strategic Plan

1. Major activities and accomplishments

Illinois PDG B-5 Strategic Plan

During Q4, the Strategic Plan was presented to the Illinois BUILD Team as part of the National BUILD Team Meeting. The Strategic Plan will inform future discussions within the Illinois BUILD Team regarding alignment with other state strategic initiatives and strategic plans.

Focused Planning - Erikson Institute/DCFS Early Childhood Project

In Q4, 88 referrals were received by the project as a whole, resulting in a cumulative sum of 172 pregnant or parenting families offered a referral for home visiting services during calendar year 2020. It has been confirmed that 130 (76%) families signed consents for home visiting, 107 (63%) families were referred to home visiting, 44 (26%) families enrolled, and 34 (20%) are still engaged in home visiting. Of the families that signed a consent, 44 later declined home visiting, and 22 families are still in the referral or enrollment process.

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The project continues to use data to inform and improve the delivery of services. For example, the initial tracking of home visiting engagement was through a yes/no response by home visiting programs. However, when the project staff requested dates of enrollment, it was learned that 10 families previously recorded as "engaged" had in fact never enrolled in a program. This confirmed that enrollment is a critical time to provide assistance, especially when a home visiting program is having difficulty contacting a family. After the referral is made, the project contacts the home visiting program every two weeks initially to understand the family's enrollment status and to explore how to be of assistance. Once a family is enrolled, the status of engagement is tracked monthly.

As part of the workplan, two cross-trainings are to be developed in each of the four DCFS regions. There have been multiple meetings in each region with Intact supervisors, home visiting programs, and/or Coordinated Intake to strengthen communication and partnership. DCFS representatives want to understand how best to connect families to home visiting services. They view this as a valuable resource, especially as they report how challenging it can be to have a growing caseload and finding available resources for families.

2. Problems

Illinois PDG B-5 Strategic Plan

There is a planned revision of the Strategic Plan which requires the development of a scope of work. Specifically, there is a preference to identify consultation services that have experience in strategic planning that uses a racial equity/social justice framework. Identification of consultation firms that have this combined expertise within their portfolio impacted the timeline.

Focused Planning - Erikson Institute/DCFS Early Childhood Project

During Q4, two home visiting programs had questions about providing services to families when the child is in foster care placement. In response, staff from the Governor's Office of Early Childhood Development (GOECD) met with one of the programs (the other program resolved the issue and resumed services with the family). In addition, GOECD worked with the other major public funders of home visiting in Illinois to develop a joint statement affirming the prioritization of families with child welfare involvement (including those with a child in placement). The statement is currently in the approval process.

The 2020 workplan included developing a plan for providing Infant/ Early Childhood Mental Health Consultation (I/ECMHC) to participating home visiting programs that do not already have access to I/ECMHC. The project has made referrals to 40 home visiting providers to date. Of these, 17 reported using I/ECMHC, but some programs reported that they did not have sufficient funds to make use of consultation. GOECD scheduled a productive problem-solving session with project staff and the I/ECMHC lead for the Illinois Maternal, Infant, and Early Childhood Home Visiting (MIECHV) program. In response, the

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major funders of home visiting are drafting a statement to build awareness of the Illinois I/ECMHC model for home visiting, and to affirm their support for home visiting programs' use of consultation.

A DCFS Intact policy update was issued in November 2020, informing Intact caseworkers that they should make home visiting referrals through a new email address. This led to 37 referrals, but inadvertently, these families were not informed that a home visiting referral was being made. Project staff is consulting with caseworkers to obtain the identified families' consent for services.

3. Significant findings and events – N/A

4. Dissemination activities

Illinois PDG B-5 Strategic Plan

The PDG B-5 Strategic Plan was presented to the Illinois BUILD Team during the National BUILD Team Meeting held in November 2020. The goal was to highlight the alignment of the Strategic Plan with Illinois' Prenatal to 3 (PN3) Policy Agenda.

Focused Planning - Erikson Institute/DCFS Early Childhood Project

The 2020 annual report was produced, including achievements, challenges, and recommendations. The report is undergoing final review by DCFS administration, and dissemination is expected in Q1 of 2021.

5. Other activities – N/A

6. Activities planned for the next reporting period

Illinois PDG B-5 Strategic Plan

A scope of work will be developed that highlights the need for consultation that has expertise in strategic planning that uses a racial equity framework.

Focused Planning - Erikson Institute/DCFS Early Childhood Project

In Q1 of 2021, the project will continue to: make and monitor referrals to home visiting; facilitate cross-training of child welfare and home visiting providers; refine data sharing policy and procedures; and survey home visiting programs again about their use of I/ECMHC.

Activity 3: Maximizing Parent & Family Knowledge, Choice, & Engagement

1. Major activities and accomplishments

Inclusion Supports for Families

Early CHOICES continues to work in collaboration with existing birth to five early care and education providers to support efforts to increase family engagement, participation, leadership, and advocacy. Early CHOICES developed curriculum for events to occur in October, November, and December 2020 to engage families in understanding inclusion, as well as coping with the realities due to the pandemic that limit children's access to inclusive environments.

On November 4, 2020, Early CHOICES and the Early Intervention Training Project collaborated to host an evening webinar for families entitled, *Inclusion, EI and My Family*, based on the Routines Based Intervention principles. Thirty-four people registered and 18 attended, representing both families and providers. There is also a recorded and on-demand version of the event currently being edited; once completed, it will be posted on the Early CHOICES YouTube page for easy access. Shorter videos were created from the longer version so families can access specific information without listening to the entire presentation.

- *Part 1 Inclusion and Natural Environments* <https://youtu.be/YC16cM4Ov24>
- *Part 2 Best Practices and Routine Based Learning* <https://youtu.be/VmlZ37IJ1ko>
- *Part 3 Routine Based Learning* https://youtu.be/_0EmS2DC4kk
- *Part 4 Your Role in Early Intervention* <https://youtu.be/m0Bp-V4yggw>

Early CHOICES also created a virtual event series, *Everyday Learning Opportunities*, to help caregivers learn tips, ideas, and strategies to support learning for young children throughout the day. They hosted these events at 7pm via Zoom on October 29, 2020 (focus on Transitions), November 18, 2020 (focus on Mealtimes), and December 10, 2020 (focus on Play). As expected, there were more registrants than attendees, so Early CHOICES created on-demand versions of these events, which have been published on YouTube and shared via their social media platforms. This is one example: <https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=jMiuAHWX0eI&list=PLRFbj7RcOrU0Q6ZGClqgyYj-Ap2HfKYTG&index=13>

Early CHOICES continued to collaborate to complete a revised online, on-demand module of six topics targeted to families and related to understanding inclusion in the early years. This is a collaborative effort with the Early Intervention Training Project to revise a current module that was initially created in 2014 and is very limited in content. The updated content is complete with activities and reflection guides to support further use. Although targeted for families, the use of these modules will reach far beyond families to early care and education professionals. The modules are being translated and will be

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posted in English and Spanish in January 2021 on the Early CHOICES website and on Early Intervention Training Project's Moodle for Early Intervention credit.

Early CHOICES continues to expand their social media presence and remains agile and adaptive as they work to put out timely, relevant content that relates to families and communities. The work in Q4 focused on inclusive Early Intervention and Special Education services, managing stress, and parenting in the age of COVID-19. The efforts targeted families but also providers, as we know that many times providers share the resources with families. A new addition this quarter is Mindfulness Mondays, a Facebook Live event scheduled for 30 minutes every Monday. Ten events were hosted from October 12, 2020 through December 14, 2020, with the reach starting at 222 people in October and ending with over 3.3K people reached in one event in December 2020.

Early Learning Council Family Advisory Committee (FAC)

Q4 started with the dissemination of marketing and application materials statewide to recruit parent leaders for the Family Advisory Committee (FAC). The applications received downstate were very minimal, so recruitment activities were extended into end of October 2020 to get more interest and applications.

Over 100 applications were submitted for FAC members. Each application was reviewed based on the criteria selected by the Early Learning Council Family Engagement Implementation Subcommittee (FEIS), the committee that proposed the creation of the FAC. The state health department regional map was used to identify seven state regions. Two parents for each region were selected, except for Cook County where four parents were selected due to the large population. A total of 16 parent leader members were selected by the end of October for the FAC. All parents selected during the application process accepted the request to serve as members of the FAC.

In order to continue the involvement of the FEIS parent members in the work of the FAC (the FEIS disbanded in December 2020 after completing their charge to increase parent engagement in the work of the Illinois Early Learning Council), we created mentorship roles for interested parents. Eight FEIS members will serve as FAC mentors; each mentor will have two FAC mentees who they will support in their transition into the Early Learning Council meetings.

Both the FAC parent leaders and the mentors attended orientation trainings and participated in their first Early Learning Council meeting in November 2020. In December, they also attended a training on Appreciative Inquiry to support communication within parent advocacy. The parent leaders were also informed of an optional Town Hall meeting in December, and many parent leaders attended.

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The orientation paperwork submitted by FAC members identified the need for support around technology. Illinois Action for Children arranged for optional technology drop-in sessions for any FAC parent leaders and mentors interested in learning technology basics.

Parent Cafés

At the start of Q4, 18 early childhood agencies were chosen out of 27 applications to conduct Parent Cafés within their own programs and communities. Those selected participated in a virtual train the trainer events on October 14, 21, and 28, preparing them to conduct Parent Cafés with the goal of reaching at least 60 parents. One agency decided not to participate after completing the trainings. Each of the participating 17 agencies completed an Action Plan.

A new Guidebook was created, focusing on parent leadership during a crisis. The Guidebook included two new topics, "Managing Family Emotions and Stress" and "Zero to Five: Schooling in the Pandemic". The Guidebook included information for conducting both in-person and virtual models of the Parent Café; having the option for in-person and virtual models allowed agencies to conduct Parent Cafés based on what was best for their community given the ever-changing state and federal COVID-19 safety guidelines.

A virtual portal was created for the agencies to access all the materials needed to train Parent Leaders and conduct Parent Cafés. The Guidebook and materials were translated into Spanish and mailed to each agency.

ExceleRate Website

In Q4, the final website content was completed, including branding, design, and provider search programming.

2. Problems

Inclusion Supports for Families

The pandemic has impacted Early CHOICES' ability to connect with families in person through meetings, conferences, and family events. Families are stressed due to COVID-19, so Early CHOICES tried a variety of ways to connect; since this is all unknown territory, their success has been hit and miss. Early CHOICES has leveraged collaboration with partners who already have connections with families, as this seems to be the best strategy in the current environment.

Early Learning Council Family Advisory Committee (FAC)

One concern Illinois Action for Children (IAFC) and other advocates have noted is the need to establish a "parent friendly atmosphere" in some committees or venues where parent input is being requested. Language, acronyms, and topics that parents may not have information about are often discussed, which limits genuine parent participation and

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engagement. After FAC members attended their first Early Learning Council meeting in November 2020, Illinois Action for Children sent out a survey to gather the parent leaders' and mentors' feelings and perceptions. This data will be used to frame discussions for how to ensure future meetings are more parent friendly.

The Early Learning Council is currently updating their goals, bylaws, and membership expectations. To ensure the protocol for the FAC follows what is established for the full Council, determining logistics and bylaws for the FAC were on hold at the end of Q4.

Parent Cafés

COVID-19 impacted the ability of programs to conduct Parent Cafés. The fluctuation between in-person vs. remote instruction due to rising COVID cases made it challenging for some agencies to conduct their Parent Cafés as often and consistently as planned. Additionally, the need to immediately pivot to a virtual platform for COVID safety led to the development of an entirely new Guidebook; it took time to research best practices, and limited information was available.

Due to COVID, there were delays in executing contracts, which resulted in delayed implementation of the Parent Cafés and delayed evaluations. However, to date all participating agencies have found the Parent Café model valuable and plan to continue using it beyond the project timeline.

ExceleRate Website

The release date of the website will be in 2021. Since this is after the end of the PDG B-5 vendor contract, the work will be supported by the Illinois Department of Human Services contract that is held with the Illinois Network for Child Care Resource & Referral Agencies (INCCRRA), the vendor.

3. Significant findings and events

Early Learning Council Family Advisory Committee (FAC)

Parent leaders may need additional support around basic technology usage; therefore, additional trainings may be offered. We also noted that since over 100 applications were received for FAC membership, there is parent interest in early childhood education and care in Illinois that we do not want to lose. Some type of parent auxiliary body will be created to include the parents who were not selected to be FAC parent leaders. This auxiliary group would be made aware of various opportunities and needs for parent participation within the early childhood landscape.

Parent Cafés

This year's model of selecting 18 agencies to conduct Parent Cafés was new. The primary goal was to extend the reach of Parent Cafés into more communities while building the capacity of early childhood agencies to better engage parents in meaningful and

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intentional ways. This change in our model and then the impact of COVID-19 made the role of the Process Coach even more critical. The Process Coach provided individualized support and additional resources as needed. Weekly check-ins and one-on-one meetings with agencies provided a better understanding of future needs. These lessons learned included the need for more upfront training and coaching around family engagement. Also, some agencies required more in-depth coaching on the Parent Café model. For some, COVID-19 highlighted the need to enhance their parent engagement skills, especially as it related to engaging families through a virtual platform. A key takeaway was that agencies needed more support than what was anticipated. The focus of Parent Café's is to support the "protective factors" and build meaningful and impactful family engagement across the State. Based on lessons learned, the project will continue to expand support for the current 17 agencies into the first quarter of 2021. Illinois will also broaden the reach by adding additional agencies.

4. Dissemination activities

Inclusion Supports for Families

Twitter: In Q4 2020, the Early CHOICES' Twitter page reached over 31K impressions and an average engagement rate of 2.2%.

Facebook: In Q4 2020, Early CHOICES averaged a 10% growth rate in followers. Their total reach peaked at 3,269 people vs. 1,324 in Q3 2020.

Instagram: As of Q4 2020, Early CHOICES has 218 Instagram followers, an increase of 29 since Q3. Instagram is a key platform for promoting resources and raising the visibility and voices of the community. Young parents are more likely to be on this platform.

The *Each and Every Child Inclusion* brochure has been included in the *Transition Folder* that Child & Family Connections receive from Child Find Illinois as a support to families transitioning out of Early Intervention services at age three. The published brochure is credited to the Illinois State Board of Education, but Early CHOICES manages the printing, translation, and dissemination.

The new "Understanding Inclusion" modules will launch in January 2021 on the Early CHOICES website and will be hosted on the Early Intervention Training Project Moodle by February 2021 for Early Intervention credit.

Early CHOICES has a Constant Contact list of over 2,200 emails that range from families, direct service professionals, professional organizations, state agency personnel, and others serving families birth to age five across systems. They send out a monthly newsletter with upcoming events and resources. They also use our colleagues from other technical assistance projects and agencies (Illinois STAR NET, Illinois Early Learning Project, Early Intervention Training Project, Early Intervention Clearinghouse, Illinois State

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Board of Education, INCCRRA, and Early Childhood Professional Learning) to help disseminate information.

Early Learning Council Family Advisory Committee (FAC)

Applications were disseminated downstate through Illinois Action for Children mailing lists, partner organizations that include Community Organizing and Family Issues (COFI) and via Facebook.

Parent Cafés

A virtual toolkit was provided to 17 agencies including marketing materials agencies could use to promote their Parent Café in their communities. Guidebooks were mailed to each agency. All materials were translated into Spanish.

5. Other activities

Inclusion Supports for Families

Early CHOICES has many projects with school districts underway. Whenever possible, they are working with school districts to reach out beyond their existing program to connect and support their local community-based organizations. These efforts have worked to increase awareness and build connections between the districts and local providers.

6. Activities planned for the next reporting period

Inclusion Supports for Families

This project was not funded for Renewal Year Two.

Early Learning Council Family Advisory Committee (FAC)

In Q1 2021, trainings and a training calendar will be created for FAC parent leaders; trainings will be conducted for FAC parent leaders; support will be provided for FAC parent leaders, including stipends, child care, technology etc.; and parent leaders will be engaged in work outside of the Early Learning Council.

Parent Cafés

In Q1 2021: an evaluation will be completed of the 2020 Parent Cafés; a plan will be developed for expanded support for agencies in need (Process Coach); and a new Infant/Toddler Parent Café topic and materials will be created and marketed. Agencies will be selected for the 2021 Parent Café cohort.

ExceleRate Website

Adding content to the website will be completed in 2021. The website will be translated into Spanish and possibly Polish. The work will continue to be sustained after the end of the PDG contract by the Department of Human Services contract with INCCRRA (vendor).

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Activity 4: Sharing Best Practices & Professional Development for the Workforce

1. Major activities and accomplishments

Facilitating Attuned Interactions (FAN)

As a part of this project, Erikson Institute participates in monthly phone calls with staff at GOECD, the Illinois State Board of Education, and the Illinois Head Start Association. In Q4, Erikson provided FAN activities for Illinois State Board of Education programs and Head Start/Early Head Start programs. This section will be broken into two sections to represent both the Illinois State Board of Education deliverables and Head Start/Early Head Start deliverables.

Illinois State Board of Education Projects: Five total Community of Practice meetings were offered targeting Illinois State Board of Education-funded programs via video conferencing. Two community of practice meetings entitled "The FAN and Supervision" were offered on December 10, 2020. A total of 16 home visiting supervisors participated.

Three additional Community of Practice meetings entitled "The FAN and Mindful Self-Regulation during Uncertain Times" were offered. Two offerings targeting the Rockford and Chicagoland areas were offered on November 5, 2020. An additional offering targeting South/Central Illinois was offered on November 3, 2020. A total of 74 FAN-trained home visitors joined the various Community of Practice offerings. Participating Illinois State Board of Education supervisors will continue to receive monthly mentoring from FAN Trainers until March 2021.

Head Start/Early Head Start Projects: A cohort of Head Start/Early Head Start Level I FAN training was provided on November 23 and November 30, 2020. Twenty home visitors were in attendance. This training serviced Parent and Child Together (PACT) Head Start and Tri-County Operations Council Head Start/Early Head Start. Participating Head Start/Early Head Start supervisors will continue to receive monthly mentoring from FAN Trainers until March 2021.

Pyramid Model Implementation & Professional Development

In Q4, the Pyramid Model Consortium (PMC) continued to engage in (at least) weekly Zoom meetings with all relevant stakeholders to execute activities and deliverables outlined in the Year One/2020 work plan. Despite the ongoing challenges presented by COVID-19, the PMC was able to operationalize the plan as intended, with minor modifications to adjust for virtual formats.

Pyramid Model Cross-System PD: During Q4, nine training events were held via Zoom on the following topics: Teaching Pyramid Model Observation Tool (TPOT), Guide to Reopening, Practice Based Coaching Equity Guide, Training in a Virtual Environment,

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Infant/Toddler Training of Trainers (ToT), and Preschool ToT. Feedback from events has been positive and participation spanned the mixed delivery system. Several of these trainings included an opportunity for an Illinois-based trainer to shadow and/or co-train in an effort to build State capacity in this area.

Pyramid Model Program Wide Implementation: As part of the QRIS Pilot, four child care programs were assigned a Process Coach and began their program-wide implementation after a formal kick-off via Zoom. Child care programs were invited to apply to be a Pyramid Model Program Wide Implementation site.

As mentioned in Q3, the plan is to engage eight child care programs, instead of eight kindergarten programs in response to changing State priorities. These child care partners are being recruited through five Service Delivery Areas (SDAs) in collaboration with INCCRRA. PMC has been conducting one-on-one informational calls with SDA staff to communicate what program-wide implementation entails and how to go about choosing the eight child care sites to participate.

Practice Based Coaching (PBC) Professional Development: In Q4, evaluations from two Practice Based Coaching training series were collected and responses continue to be extremely positive. During Q4, time was spent planning PBC professional development for implementation sites that will take place over Zoom in 2021 including: PBC, PBC peer-to-peer, PBC in a group.

Practice Based Coaching (PBC) Communities of Practice: During Q4, several opportunities for coaches to engage with and learn from one another were planned. The Community of Practice series is a monthly meeting for 12-15 coaches to network, share resources, and share challenges and successes. Also offered and executed was a small group, four-week Professional Learning Community on the topic of Action Planning. Planning for the January 2021 launch of a new Community of Practice, with an Illinois-based facilitator, also occurred during Q4.

Trauma-Informed Care Approach: In Q4, implementation sites continued to provide their staff with ePyramid Model access codes for Trauma-Informed Care and Wellness: Taking Care of Yourself trainings. Evaluations for these offerings are still being collected, but feedback so far has been positive (very good to excellent). PMC also collaborated with State partners at the Lurie Children's Hospital to provide continued education in the form of a webinar offered twice to mental health consultants/social workers at implementation sites. A Professional Learning Community (PLC) was provided in Q4 for mental health consultants who attended the Trauma-Informed Care training in Q3.

Pyramid Model Trainer/Coach Registry

The PDG B-5 Illinois Pyramid Model Trainer and Coach Registry Cross-Sector Professional Development Implementation Manual was distributed to all Pyramid Model trainers,

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coaches, and Master Cadre members. This manual outlines the mechanism for Gateways Registry Membership and renewal for trainers, coaches, and training participants. In addition, it outlines the process for training approval for local delivery of Pyramid Model trainings.

The Pyramid Model Information Form was distributed to all Pyramid Model trainers, coaches, and Master Cadre members. Information received will assist with the collection of demographic information throughout the State. By the end of Q4, 87 trainers, coaches, and Master Cadre members submitted forms.

The following Pyramid Model professional development offerings were vetted, approved, and added: Preschool and Infant Toddler Pyramid Model Training of Trainers, Coaching for Equity, Training in a Virtual Environment, and Trauma Foundations in Early Childhood.

For the evaluation, instrument development and data collection continued as scheduled. New tools this quarter included event feedback forms for Pyramid Model Consortium events: Guide to Re-Opening, Training in a Virtual World, Coaching for Equity, and Preschool/Infant-Toddler Training of Trainer events; a Process Coach Survey was also developed. Data Collection Guidelines for use by the child care sites were also distributed to Process Coaches for these newly implementing programs (November start-up).

All data collected during PDG B-5 Renewal Year One were cleaned, coded, and analyzed for the year-end report. Data sources included PMC event feedback and participation lists, Program Profiles from early childhood education and care implementation sites, Process Coach Logs, Process Coach Surveys, and Early Childhood Benchmarks of Quality (EC-BOQ, and self-assessment of program-wide implementation). A Year One evaluation report draft was distributed to project leaders for review and approval (December 30, 2020), and final edits will be completed based on their feedback.

PD for Meaningful Inclusion

Early CHOICES is collaborating with existing technical assistance providers and trainers through two statewide groups to establish models of exemplary practices in child care. The Inclusion Subcommittee of the Integration & Alignment Committee of the Early Learning Council met on November 5, 2020, and the Early Childhood Least Restricted Environment Stakeholders Consortium met on December 15, 2020.

Two full time Inclusion Specialists were hired in August to support this work. In Q4, both staff worked to create the *Early Learning Opportunities* series and *Inclusion, EI and My Family* webinar mentioned in the Activity Three Inclusion Supports for Families section of this Q4 Report. They are also working with Community Inclusion Teams in three communities and the ExceleRate Pilot sites (see Activity Five).

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Early CHOICES with the ExceleRate Pilot Project Coordinator hosted an informational webinar November 12, 2020, for the 38 pilot sites to explain inclusion and offer targeted technical assistance to those programs who apply for it. Early CHOICES received five applications and selected three programs to work with during the pilot. The programs are Prairieland in Morris, Illinois, Little Angels in Harrisburg, Illinois, and Centralia Mary's House in Centralia, Illinois. Two programs are at the licensure level and one is at the Silver level in ExceleRate (Illinois' QRIS). Two programs met with Early CHOICES to begin the process in December 2020. The informational webinar also served to connect Early CHOICES with the CCR&R Quality Specialists; as a result, we have set up a training for February 2020 on inclusion with the Child Care Resource and Referral at the John A. Logan College.

In Q4, Early CHOICES continued to collaborate with Early Intervention and INCCRRA to discuss meaningful professional development opportunities that are not duplicative of other efforts but are also systemic in nature to support systems change. The plan is to create a Community of Practice for professional development providers facilitated by Early CHOICES to build up the toolboxes of PD providers so they can support inclusion across their work. These efforts will bolster the message of inclusion across systems and environments to build capacity.

Community Systems Statewide Supports and Early CHOICES met again to look at the connections in supporting collaborations. Early CHOICES will be meeting with two community collaborations in January to talk about how Early CHOICES can support their efforts to build practices that support inclusion in those communities based off of building community usage of the Ages and Stages Questionnaire (ASQ) and ASQ-Social Emotional (ASQ-SE)

In an effort to build connections across local education agencies (LEAs) and community-based organizations (CBOs), a model based on implementation science is being used. Three communities (Mannheim, Collinsville, and Springfield) have been identified to receive leadership and program supports for system change through training, coaching, and technical assistance to inform how to scale up inclusive practices birth to five across systems. Each community has determined a leader, and Community Inclusion Teams (CIT) are being built that include local education agencies, Early Intervention representatives (providers or Child and Family Connections staff), Head Start/ Early Head Start representatives, community child care, and families. Early CHOICES Inclusion Specialists are assigned to each site to assist in creating the Community Inclusion Teams, onboarding new members, establishing a shared vision and assessing current practices. The Community Inclusion Teams, with the guidance of the Inclusion Specialists, identified goals and are creating an action plan to increase access to inclusive early care and education for children with disabilities in their community. The Inclusion Specialist will provide the training, coaching, and technical assistance to support the action plan.

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Home Visiting Credentialing

During Q3, a crosswalk was completed between the Start Early (formerly known as the Ounce of Prevention Fund) home visitor core competencies, the Gateways to Opportunity© Family Specialist Credential, and the Home Visitor Child Development Associate (CDA). The crosswalk was presented to the Executive Committee of the Home Visiting Task Force on October 15, 2020, and the findings were well received. A small leadership group will convene in January 2021 to discuss next steps, an activity that aligns with and supports the State's PDG B-5 Strategic Plan and its Prenatal to Three (PN3) home visiting workforce development priorities.

Home Visiting Gateway Registry Improvement

To test the new Gateways Registry design, about 2,190 registered Gateways users were surveyed, with 1,311 responding. Home visitors were oversampled to ensure a sufficient response. A stakeholder group comprised of home visitors, family child care providers, Early Intervention (EI) professionals, and family support workers met on November 19, 2020, to review results of the testing and to provide final input on the proposed programming changes. (This meeting was originally planned for October but was postponed to November.) In addition, a baseline demographic data report was generated in December for all Gateways professionals registered and currently classified as home visitors. The report includes data on 1,295 individuals (some of which are not actually evidence-based home visitors as defined by the field).

Early Childhood Credential Completion Cohort (EC4)

Q4 included several major activities and accomplishments for Illinois' EC4 project. First, all institutional grant recipients were invited and supported to participate in the virtual Competency-Based Education Network (C-BEN) conference from November 10-13, 2020. The purpose of this conference was to facilitate grantee networking with higher education colleagues nationally and to support grantee learning around effective strategies for alternative delivery of postsecondary coursework.

Second, Illinois Board of Higher Education (IBHE) staff held project status calls twice with each institutional grant recipient in October and November. The October 2020 status call agenda included a discussion of cohort updates, successes, and challenges. In addition, grantees were asked to provide feedback on the all-cohort draft survey and to plan to provide cohort demographic information for their quarterly report to the IBHE. The

November 2020 status call agenda included a debrief about the C-BEN conference, verification of cohort demographic data, and year-end notes. Grant leaders were asked to prompt cohort participant completion of the all-cohort survey. IBHE staff also discussed with institutional grantees planning for PDG B-5 Renewal Year Two cohort work in 2021.

Third, IBHE staff completed administrative tasks related to the EC4 grants. Grant recipients submitted to the IBHE quarterly reports by their due date at the end of

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October, the IBHE disbursed the final installment of funding to grantees in November 2020, and the IBHE staff compiled a November 2020 memo for the Governor's Office of Early Childhood Development and Illinois State Board of Education outlining demographic information about the cohort participants across all institutions.

Finally, the IBHE staff worked with grant leaders to create and implement a cohort participant survey to ascertain their views on program delivery and the various forms of support available through their respective institutional cohort programs. The survey was distributed in October-November 2020 with an overall 67% response rate. The IBHE staff analyzed the survey results and prepared a summary report with findings.

Credential Fee Waiver/Educational Debt Relief/Course Modularization Credential

A significant number of the early childhood workforce in Illinois continues to submit Gateways Credential applications to take advantage of the financial support provided by the credential fee waiver. The credential application fee waiver budget was fully expended on December 10, 2020.

A total of 3,750 credential applications were received and processed from project inception (June 2020) through December 10, 2020, resulting in over 1,500 distinct individuals receiving approximately 2,200 credentials (individuals may qualify for more than one credential). Demographic and other relevant data was collected and will be analyzed for a comprehensive report and a corresponding set of "one-pagers" which highlight key facts about the Illinois workforce and credential fee waiver.

The Education Reimbursement initiative continued to receive applications from the early childhood community. All funding was awarded to eligible practitioners. An analysis and a data report were completed.

The participating higher education institutions were: Heartland Community College, Moraine Valley Community College, Illinois State University, National Louis University, and Northern Illinois University. During Q4, faculty from the selected institutions continued to develop, review, and revise the remaining groups of competencies in partnership with a cyclical review process conducted by state and national consultants. After each faculty group completed their "final revisions" incorporating consultant feedback, the competencies/curriculum designs were then shared with Illinois Faculty Fellows for additional input; suggestions to revise or strengthen the work of the project were captured. Institution faculty, in partnership with State consultants, reviewed the additional feedback and made further revisions (if needed) to ensure well developed and scaffolded curriculum for every competency.

Selected institutions faculty and consultants attended the virtual CBExchange 2020, an annual conference hosted by C-BEN (the national Competency-Based Education Network)

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in November 2020. The conference strengthened faculty understanding of competency-based education, including design and implementation aspects.

In December 2020, INCCRRA convened a meeting with selected institution's faculty and consultants to discuss plans for the proposed 2021 piloting of the modules. Guidance was provided to each institution to support comprehensive piloting of all competencies. Guidance established, with national consultation, was set at a threshold of 25 students testing each competency, at a minimum of two, potentially three, institutions. Preliminary discussions regarding data points and information that will need to be collected during the pilot were conducted. Each institution will develop comprehensive plans for piloting in 2021.

Also, in December 2020, INCCRRA convened a statewide meeting of the Faculty Fellows, state and national consultants, and selected institution's faculty via Zoom. Competency module development was showcased. Faculty discussed data collection aspects and began developing survey questions for the pilot.

2. Problems

Facilitating Attuned Interactions (FAN)

Services were delayed in response to the COVID-19 pandemic and due to the need to develop virtually accessible FAN trainings. The projects will culminate in 2021 rather than December 2020, as originally planned.

Pyramid Model Implementation & Professional Development

Based on guidance from the GOECD, the Pyramid Model Consortium shifted their focus from kindergarten to child care for the Program Wide Implementation project; therefore, a pivot had to be made in recruiting efforts towards child care. The eight child care programs participating in program-wide implementation have not yet been finalized, but the five SDAs that will be supporting them are all engaged, and sites will be chosen in early 2021.

Pyramid Model Trainer/Coach Registry

Training activity has been limited due to COVID-19. Trainers, coaches, and Master Cadre members did not submit Pyramid Model Information Forms in a timely manner, impacting their entry into the registry as an identified Pyramid Model Trainer/Coach.

PD for Meaningful Inclusion

Using technology to connect has become the new normal, but for child care providers technology use can still be a challenge. Early CHOICES has offered to use Zoom to meet with ExceleRate Pilot participants chosen for targeted technical assistance, but the providers prefer phone calls. Consistent use of email has also posed a communication challenge. Additionally, systems change takes time and is built on relationships, attitudes,

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and beliefs. Systems change is difficult to measure and show impact in a short time frame; these difficulties have been amplified with the pandemic. Early CHOICES adjusted the budget to hire an additional full-time inclusion specialist with half funded from ISBE Early CHOICES 619 IDEA funding. The candidate that had been interviewed in August was offered the position in October but turned it down due to the instability of funding. Early CHOICES has re-posted the position.

Home Visiting Gateway Registry Improvement

There were some additional delays due to pandemic-related priorities. The Gateways programming changes will now be completed by January 30, 2021. Gateways users will be asked to update their profiles by February 28, 2021, and the final report will be produced by June 30, 2021.

3. Significant findings and events

Facilitating Attuned Interactions (FAN)

Two Head Start/Early Head Start FAN Trainer Candidates were interviewed and selected to become FAN trainers. The candidates are in the process of receiving an initial FAN Training and will be participating in the FAN Train the Trainer process beginning in January 2021. Overall, trainees that participated in the FAN Training found the trainings to be very helpful. Participants expressed the trainings supported learning strategies to maintain a positive rapport with the family, stay mindful of their own state of regulation, take more care of themselves (one participant described it as "an essential piece of self-care"), build parents' capacity to engage with their child(ren), and reflect on their work with families.

Pyramid Model Implementation & Professional Development

Training in a Virtual World: Seventy-three percent of participants rated this training as "excellent", and all reported meeting the learning objectives. Participants benefited from learning engagement strategies, tips, and tools such as breakout rooms, whiteboard, using trivia, and navigation tools. Looking forward, participants desire more opportunities to explore and practice these topics, as well as ideas for supporting staff working with students with disabilities.

Practice Based Coaching (PBC) Equity Guide: The majority of participants rated this training as "excellent" and most reported meeting the learning objectives. Participants appreciated having a concrete resource and hearing what others are doing. There is a desire for continued conversations around equity, practical application, and more time for discussion and breakout rooms in the future.

Guide to Reopening ToT: This training was very well received, with the majority rating it as "very good" or "excellent." Most reported meeting the learning objectives and they found information on strategies, the importance of wellness and routines, and supporting

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teachers and families to be the most important. Participants desired more time for discussion and breakout rooms, as well as the Pyramid Model expectations moving forward in the remote world.

TPOt: Participants had positive feedback (very good to excellent ratings) and most indicated meeting the learning objectives. There was interest in additional opportunities to check scoring and readiness for TPOt use, as well as more opportunities to engage/practice.

Pyramid Model Trainer/Coach Registry

Evaluation summary: State project leaders and the Pyramid Model Consortium (PMC) collaborated to support the Pyramid Model implementation sites and to strengthen the broader early childhood education and care workforce. The work was carried out within the context of COVID-19 where programs are providing services through a combination of in-person and remote settings.

In terms of the PMC professional development offerings, there were more than 260 attendees (with duplicates) across the real-time events including members of the Master Cadre, personnel from the early childhood education and care implementation sites, and members of the broader group of Pyramid Model Trainers. Additionally, more than 1,400 licenses for accessing the online ePyramid Modules in both Wellness and Trauma-Informed Care (TIC) were distributed to the implementation sites for self-paced use. Participants typically found the statewide events to be relevant and useful to their professional practice, and most participants expressed confidence that implementing the strategies has the potential to benefit the children in their care.

Process Coaches are collaborating virtually with early childhood education and care program Leadership Teams, administrators, and internal coaches, among other staff. The focus was on re-establishing team plans and goals, connecting staff to professional development opportunities with a focus on Wellness and Trauma-Informed Care, and supporting programs to assist families during remote and hybrid learning. Process Coaches generally feel well-prepared for their roles and responsibilities and expressed interest in additional training opportunities related to remote coaching strategies, guidance around adapting Pyramid Model practices to remote/virtual teaching and learning, and more opportunities to reflect and share ideas with other Process Coaches.

EC-BOQ results available from implementing programs this quarter indicated that on average early childhood education and care Leadership Teams are reporting all critical elements included in this tool are "partially in place", with a fair portion reportedly "in place". The strongest elements noted were Establishing Leadership Teams, Staff Buy-in, and Program-wide Expectations. The greatest areas for growth include collecting and using data (Monitoring Implementation and Outcomes) and Professional Development and Staff Support Plans.

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During PDG B-5 Renewal Year One, Pyramid Model implementation activities among the early childhood education and care programs included an emphasis on family engagement to bridge school and home; finding new ways to support children's social emotional development and sharing program-wide expectations; and working to connect staff to training opportunities. Process Coaches described the approaches that are helping to move programs forward, which included facilitating access to training opportunities, providing resources, using the EC-BOQ as a guide for planning, and supporting teachers' use of Pyramid Model practices.

Professional development priority areas going forward include trainings to support families in Pyramid Model strategies (Prevent, Teach, Reinforce for Families, Positive Solutions for Families); program/personnel training to support equity such as inclusion strategies, the PBC Equity Guide, and implicit bias; and strategies to address challenging behavior. Going forward, early childhood education and care programs would benefit from additional guidance around implementing the Pyramid Model remotely, ongoing support for staff buy-in, and continued support for families.

The PDG B-5 Renewal Year One evaluation was based on several months of grant activities that yielded descriptive information about the notable progress being made, as well as the unique challenges posed by the current learning environment. As the project moves forward and remote teaching and learning strategies are strengthened, a focus on Pyramid Model program-wide implementation and fidelity to the model, and the related evaluation of these components, will be important next steps.

PD for Meaningful Inclusion

Community Inclusion Teams (CIT) continue to meet with Inclusion Specialists to plan increases in inclusive options and upcoming meetings. In addition to the meetings with sites, Inclusion Specialists are receiving monthly Practiced Based Coaching support.

Home Visiting Credentialing

The crosswalk was completed in Q3, with the findings presented to the Early Learning Council Home Visiting Task Force in Q4. In summary, both the Home Visitor Child Development Associate (CDA) credential and the Gateways to Opportunity© Family Specialist Credential showed alignment with the Illinois home visitor core competencies. The HV CDA is a more entry-level credential, while the Family Specialist Credential is leveled and stackable.

Early Childhood Credential Completion Cohort (EC4)

The Early Childhood Credential Completion Cohort project is reaching racially and ethnically diverse working professionals. Forty-one percent of cohort participants are persons of color. More study is needed to understand the impact of the pandemic on the needs of working adults, particularly those employed in early care and education settings and engaged in postsecondary learning. The survey of cohort participants found that

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most respondents believed the various forms of financial, advising, course delivery, peer learning, and coaching/mentoring supports were very important or important to them. Surprisingly, the survey revealed that transportation and child care support was not as important to as many respondents as anticipated and as frequently noted in the literature about the needs of working adults. This result, in addition to a desire to evaluate overall program implementation and impact, should spur further research.

Credential Fee Waiver/Educational Debt Relief /Course Modularization

There was a 312% increase in credential applications received at INCCRRA immediately following the announcement of the credential fee waiver. Gateways credentials included in the fee waiver were: Early Childhood Education, Infant Toddler, Illinois Director, Family Child Care, Family Specialist, and the Technical Assistance Credentials. The response to the fee waiver validates that the \$65 application fee is a significant barrier to the (underpaid) early care and education workforce.

The review and revision of all (100%) of the Gateways ECE Credential Competencies was completed. Faculty have shared anecdotally that the process of "backwards design" development has shifted how they think of curriculum design for early childhood teacher preparation. They anticipate there will be "ripple effects" from the impact of this work throughout higher education institutions for years to come in terms of course design. Piloting institutions began development of their 2021 implementation plans. Faculty representing approximately 35% of the State's higher education institutions drafted survey questions to evaluate the pilot project.

4. Dissemination activities

Facilitating Attuned Interactions (FAN)

Home visitors and supervisors within Illinois State Board of Education and Head Start/Early Head Start programs that have received or are currently receiving FAN Training received invitations to Level II FAN training and ongoing Communities of Practice.

Pyramid Model Implementation & Professional Development

During Q4, PMC distributed 210 eModule codes (105 trauma, 105 wellness) to Pyramid Model implementation sites.

Pyramid Model Trainer/Coach Registry

Formative data was shared throughout Q4, including feedback summaries across PMC professional development events, and a summary of the Program Profile (n=25) collected during September and October. A comprehensive year-end evaluation report draft was distributed to project leaders.

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PD for Meaningful Inclusion

Cross-sector professional development opportunities include webinars with Illinois STAR NET on inclusive environments and embedding structured teaching in inclusive classrooms. The opportunities we created for families *Early Learning Opportunities and Inclusion, EI and My Family* mentioned previously are also attended by professionals across systems including Early Intervention providers, home visitors, and family engagement specialists.

The "Understanding Inclusion" new modules will launch in January 2021 on the Early CHOICES website and will be hosted on the Early Intervention Training Project Moodle by February 2021 for Early Intervention credit. The social media efforts that have been built over the last year will allow for wider dissemination.

Early CHOICES has a Constant Contact list of over 2200 contacts that range from families, direct service professionals, professional organizations, State agency personal and others serving families birth to age five across systems. They send out a monthly newsletter with upcoming events and resources. They also use colleagues from other technical assistance projects and agencies (Illinois STAR NET, Illinois Early Learning Project, Early Intervention Training Project, Early Intervention Clearinghouse, Illinois State Board of Education, INCCRRA, and Early Childhood Professional Learning) to help disseminate information.

Home Visiting Credentialing

The crosswalk was completed in Q3 and the findings were presented to the Executive Committee of the Home Visiting Task Force in October 2020. The final report underwent editing in December; the final version is expected in January 2021. Upon publication, the Crosswalk Report and findings will be shared with other key partners for more widespread dissemination.

Credential Fee Waiver/Educational Debt Relief /Course Modularization

The announcement of Gateways Credential fee waiver was disseminated via a variety of mechanisms including publishing on social media (e.g. Gateways Website), was shared in articles within child care related newsletters, and was broadcast/shared by both the Illinois Department of Human Services and the statewide CCR&R system on an ongoing basis.

For the Education Reimbursement initiative, Facebook messages were posted, and email blasts were sent out. Announcements regarding the higher education institutions awarded the PDG Modularization grants were sent to the Professional Development Advisory Council (PDAC) members and announced at their meetings; announcements were also placed on the Illinois Gateways Website and the GOECD website.

Ongoing project updates have been shared during the Professional Development Advisory Council (PDAC), ACCESS (two-year faculty group), and ILAECTE (four-year faculty group)

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fall meetings. A deeper review of the work is planned for the spring (April 2021) Gateways Higher Education Forum. The project report, when finalized, will be disseminated broadly: posted to the GOECD and Gateways websites, shared at the Illinois Early Learning Council and PDAC meetings, shared with both ACCESS and ILAECTE, among other stakeholders.

5. Other activities

Early Childhood Credential Completion Cohort (EC4)

The IBHE staff will engage in activities to launch Year Two of the cohort grants in 2021.

6. Activities planned for the next reporting period

Facilitating Attuned Interactions (FAN)

In Q1 of 2021, FAN Level II training will start for Illinois State Board of Education and Head Start Practitioners. Additionally, a Train-the-Trainer for Practitioner FAN with two staff will be held to expand Head Start's capacity to provide FAN training to front-line staff of programs after the grant.

Pyramid Model Implementation & Professional Development

In Q1 of 2021, the Pyramid Model Consortium will: identify eight child care sites with INCCRRA; launch program-wide leadership team via Zoom for the eight new child care sites; launch Professional Learning Communities (PLC) with an Illinois-based facilitator on Trauma-Informed Care; and continue the Trauma-Informed Care PLC for mental health consultants.

Pyramid Model Trainer/Coach Registry

In Q1 of 2021, Illinois will: maintain the Gateways Registry Database of Trainers and Coaches; maintain the Gateways Registry Database of Registry-Approved Pyramid Model trainings; and continue evaluation data analysis and reporting.

PD for Meaningful Inclusion

In Q1 of 2021, Early CHOICES will: plan a Community of Practice (COP) for professional development with the Early Childhood Least Restricted Environment Stakeholders PD Workgroup; build relationships with each director from the three ExceleRate pilot sites (Mary's House, Little Angels, and Prairieland) to determine baseline in the What Makes Inclusion Work planning tool and develop an initial action plan; provide additional professional development workshops for the field; and continue support for Community Inclusion Teams in three communities to create implementation site teams within each community (Head Start, or child care) to begin more specific planning for inclusive supports in classrooms in fall 2021.

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Home Visiting Gateways Registry Improvement

In Q1 of 2021, Illinois will complete the changes to the Gateways Registry that include a clear definition of the home visitor position, and Registry members currently designated as home visitors will be asked to update their profiles.

Credential Fee Waiver/Educational Debt Relief /Course Modularization

The credential application fee waiver budget was fully expended as of December 10, 2020. In addition, all funding allocated for the Education Reimbursement activity was awarded to eligible practitioners. Both supports are needed by the (underpaid) early care and education workforce. If funding permits, it has been requested that the \$65 credential renewal fee and an increase in educational debt relief be included as a critical support for the workforce (credentials must be renewed every five years). A data report will be developed which will serve as the basis for a one-page summary and data flyer. The report, flyer, and one-page summary will be laid out in a formal marketing design and shared once available.

A deeper review of the work is planned for the spring Gateways Higher Education Forum (April 2021). The project report, when finalized, will be disseminated broadly: posted on GOECD and Gateways websites, shared at the Illinois Early Learning Council and PDAC meetings, shared with both ACCESS and ILAECTE, among others. Additionally, the pilot will be implemented and evaluated in 2021.

Activity 5: Improving Quality/Service Integration, Expanding Access

1. Major activities and accomplishments

Tiered QRIS/Tiered Funding Pilot

Thirty-eight of the 43 centers participating in the Pilot during Q3 decided to execute contracts with the Illinois Department of Human Services (IDHS) to implement Pilot QRIS standards, including wage increases based on credentials, staffing pattern enhancements, and Continuous Quality Improvement (CQI) practices. The centers completed the detailed IDHS contracting process, and 36 of them had executed contracts by the end of the Q4. The other two had been closed for COVID-19 quarantine and have now reopened. Those centers that dropped out were mostly experiencing COVID-19 related issues and could not take on something new. GOECD presented a webinar on payroll reporting and billing requirements. Participating centers began enhancing salaries to meet Pilot standards on November 1, 2020. They will begin adding staff to meet Pilot staffing requirements in 2021. Centers found the IDHS contracting process especially difficult to navigate. GOECD began to document the issues and met with IDHS staff several times to address them. A full report suggesting IDHS system improvements is being prepared to share with IDHS next quarter.

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The Illinois Network of Child Care Resource and Referral Agencies (INCCRRA) reviewed center budgets to ensure that proposed staff salaries were consistent with individuals' credentials in the Gateways to Opportunity registry, which INCCRRA also manages. INCCRRA participated in planning and presenting the payroll reporting webinar and has begun reviewing center billings and payroll reports to ensure consistency with Gateways before forwarding them to GOECD and IDHS for final approval. INCCRRA also created a new Pilot standards chart and related materials. They created a dedicated Pilot webpage within the ExceleRate QRIS website. As administrator of the ExceleRate Illinois QRIS, INCCRRA also drafted an Internal Procedures Manual specific to the Pilot.

The McCormick Center for Early Childhood Leadership held an introductory Zoom meeting with centers to explain the virtual assessment process and the CQI supports they will provide. They began weekly sessions with each center to familiarize them with the assessment instruments and prepare them to use the results. Infant toddler classroom meetings are held every Tuesday and preschool classroom meetings every Thursday. A McCormick Center leadership advisor introduced the Administrator Role Perception Survey to program leaders and collected completed surveys from 42 individuals at the 38 centers. Results will be used to help administrators develop Individual Professional Development Plans.

Community Based Planning for Expansion

During Q4, the Project Manager and community consultants were hired and began to implement the community-level planning process outlined by Illinois Action for Children in previous quarters. Collaboration continued with the Illinois Early Childhood Asset Map (IECAM) for community data and with IFF (formerly Illinois Facilities Fund) for support with facilities development planning. The Elgin planning group was formed and oriented. Preliminary work continued with East Aurora organizations. Effingham was brought into the project as a new community.

2. Problems

Tiered QRIS/Tiered Funding Pilot

The complexity of the IDHS contracting process caused unexpected delays, but the Pilot is designed to inform system improvements, so this was a lesson learned rather than a problem.

Community Based Planning for Expansion

COVID-19 continues to be a major obstacle to community-level planning. School districts are especially overwhelmed with the demands of virtual instruction and are consumed with present-day challenges.

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3. Significant findings and events

Tiered QRIS/Tiered Funding Pilot

Findings about the IDHS contracting process will be documented and shared with IDHS in the next Quarter.

4. Dissemination activities

Tiered QRIS/Tiered Funding Pilot

GOECD, INCCRRA, and the McCormick Center shared Pilot QRIS principles and standards with early care and education officials in Michigan. BUILD hosted the video meeting. GOECD presented a PowerPoint and detailed paper on the Pilot to high level policymakers in Illinois, including the Early Childhood Interagency Team, which coordinates services among State agencies, the Governor's Education Leadership Team, and the Early Learning Council Executive Committee.

5. Other activities – N/A

6. Activities planned for the next reporting period

Tiered QRIS/Tiered Funding Pilot

Activities for the next Quarter include a webinar for centers providing more detail on the full set of Pilot standards. INCCRRA will update the Pilot web page in preparation for the webinar and beyond as we get user experience. The McCormick Center will continue its weekly sessions on using the Environment Rating Scales for program improvement. The McCormick ARPS profile will be used to orient administrators to the Whole Leadership Framework. Leadership advisors will meet individually with administrators, discussing leadership practices and helping them plan for their own professional development. GOECD will include a description of the Pilot in its statewide newsletter.

Community Based Planning for Expansion

Outreach to additional communities with large slot gaps will be an important activity in Q1 of 2021. As the communities currently engaged get further into the planning process, project staff will document obstacles and lessons learned, and will be prepared to modify their supports as needed.

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Activity 6: Monitoring, Evaluation, & Data Use for Continuous Improvement

1. Major activities and accomplishments

Data Linkage (IDHS & ISBE)

ISBE: In Q4, the following major activities and accomplishments occurred: met approximately weekly to biweekly to prepare a timeline and project plan that would align with ongoing HHSi2 and Department of Innovation and Technology (DoIT) timelines; executed subcontract with Northern Illinois University; and met iteratively with staff from the Governor's Office and the Department of Innovation and Technology (DoIT) to update project plan timelines. Representative legal counsel was convened to start the data contributor process to enable data connectors. A design workshop and build sprint with IBM was completed which included mapped process flow and the creation of main pain points for users. A separate Cloud Pack for Data Platform was established, and data search and request functionality was created. The vendor for the Illinois State Board of Education data connection work was selected and formal data requests were submitted for program and aggregate level data. Discussions and purchased services have been initiated with IBM for data integration and governance support.

IDHS: In Q4, IDHS met iteratively with staff from the Governor's Office and the HHSi2 legal and governance support team. Meetings were held with legal teams and general councils from partner agencies laying groundwork for a data contribution template. The legal agreement was extended for the last unduplicated count to allow for additional analysis. A formal request was made for program level and aggregate data.

Cost Modeling

In Q4, all remaining deliverables were reviewed and finalized with input and feedback from members and staff for the Governor's Commission on Equitable Early Childhood Education and Care Funding. This included final revisions to the Early Intervention and Early Childhood Special Education placeholder estimates within the cost model, as well as visualizations to support interpretation of the components that make up the cost model.

Illinois Early Childhood Asset Map (IECAM)

In Q4, the contract period was revamped with the vendor.

2. Problems

Data Linkage (IDHS & ISBE)

The COVID-19 crisis created significant additional capacity constraints, as leadership from each representative agency transferred significant capacity to the COVID-19 response. Delay in Intergovernmental Agreements has limited our ability to meet project plans.

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Illinois Early Childhood Asset Map (IECAM)

Project faced delays due to legal contract issues with the vendor and lack of an executed Intergovernmental Agreement.

3. Significant findings and events

Data Linkage (IDHS & ISBE)

During discovery, HHSi2 has identified challenges with integrations and are waiting on data sharing agreements before a resolution can be found. Difficulty with the procurement and data request processes has led to delays in completing the work. Note, executing the Intergovernmental Agreement and data sharing agreement as well as hiring the project manager have been significant events.

Cost Modeling

The cost model estimate represents a more than six-fold increase in Illinois' current early childhood education and care system expenditures. This funding goal will serve as a guiding beacon for future early childhood investments, helping to inform investments and policy decisions beyond the life of the Early Childhood Funding Commission.

4. Dissemination activities

Data Linkage (IDHS & ISBE)

A presentation was made to the P20 Council.

5. Other activities – N/A

6. Activities planned for the next reporting period

Data Linkage (IDHS & ISBE)

ISBE: In Q1 we will: develop data sharing agreements between IDHS and DoIT; analyze the data shared between HHSi2/IDHS and LDS 2.0; design a technical solution for data access point and integration, which includes development, documentation creation, and configuration of informatica tool; finalize standardization crosswalk of all data demographics in ISBE and IDHS for LDS 2.0; and integrate Customer 360 IDHS data and build data access point to integrate the data.

IDHS: The following activities are planned for Q1: conduct Informatica Discovery for early childhood Data Linkage, including initial definitions of rules for trust, matching and survivorship; begin initial standardization of demographics via crosswalks between ISBE and IDHS data definitions based on defined rules for trust, matching and survivorship; develop data sharing agreements between IDHS and DoIT; analyze the data shared between HHSi2/IDHS and LDS 2.0; design technical solutions for data access point and

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integration (includes development, documentation creation, and configuration of Informatica tool); analyze Profile Match Tuning of IDHS data systems (including HHSi2 having to update its configuration, trust, matching and survivorship rules depending on the results of the tuning); and finalize the standardization crosswalk of all data demographics in ISBE and IDHS for LDS 2.0 and integrate Customer 360 IDHS data.

Cost Modeling

In 2021, the cost model will be incorporated into final materials for the Early Childhood Funding Commission, including publication on a Commission website and submission to the Governor's Office for review.

Illinois Early Childhood Asset Map (IECAM)

In Q1, a sub-contract will be initiated with a firm or we will identify the capacity to gather end-user feedback and business requirements for an updated IECAM user interface and user experience. Protocols for end-user feedback gathering and business requirements will be developed.

Bonus Activities

1. Major activities and accomplishments

Coordinated Application, Eligibility, Enrollment

Four home visiting collaborative communities were selected to participate in the Coordinated Intake Pilot project, using a criterion to assess the community's readiness capacity and strength of community systems development to implement the Integrated Intake and Referral System (IRIS). The selection process included submission of an application and a direct call interview with the project lead and other staff.

In preparation for the launch of the Pilot, the project lead alongside other state-support staff received training on the Integrated Intake and Referral System; the University of Kansas developed data governance structure and agreements for use of Integrated Intake and Referral System; and the University of Illinois developed resources on continuous quality improvements to support the communities.

I/ECMHC Database, Orientation, and Reflective Practice

In Q4, regular planning and update calls continued with the Infant/Early Childhood Mental Health Consultation (I/ECMHC) Project Team. The 3rd I/ECMHC Orientation was delivered in November 2020 in a virtual learning environment, including an online module and 11 Zoom sessions, inclusive of the FAN training. The Diversity-Informed Tenets for Work with Infants, Children, and Families was offered virtually as a supplemental session in October 2020. Three new trainers were used for the delivery of virtual orientation training in

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November to expand the pool of presenters to emphasize diversity. The Fall I/ECMHC Retreat was held virtually on November 17, 2020 and was led by Dr. Eva Shivers from the Indigo Cultural Center. The four Reflective Learning Group (RLG) are continuing. Due to demand, a fifth RLG was added and began a virtual group in December.

For the Database, a small pilot group of consultants was recruited to identify Database issues before it is open to the wider audience. A bug in the system was identified and being address. Final testing was conducted on the searchable consultant database. I/ECMHC staff are working on creating content to include with the database in order to explain I/ECMHC system, qualifications, and benefits to programs that may utilize the database to search for a consultant. A fillable PDF form of the application was created for consultants to fill out and be listed on the database, as many consultants are working from locations without access to a printer. INCCRRA staff attended the November virtual retreat to present information on both the searchable database and activity tracker. There were several meetings to discuss and finalize the data elements for the activity tracker. Based on these requirements, development is again moving forward.

Collaborative Transition & Alignment from Birth to the Early Grades

Wabash Area Development (WADI): WADI hired for the position of Transitional Work Specialist; this role will work with WADI leadership, schools and community to organize and implement activities around kindergarten transition. WADI's focus is on the social/emotional component of kindergarten transition. They will provide staff, parents, and family support on best practices for the social/emotional support of young children using the Conscious Discipline curriculum. WADI created a video for staff to launch the supports being used with Conscious Discipline. Their teachers and home visitors supported family engagement by discussing Conscious Discipline with parents and distributed a survey that will inform parent and family understanding and supports needed around social/emotion regulation and use of Conscious Discipline. After the parent survey is completed, parents will receive a Conscious Discipline home toolkit to use. Materials for staff and families have been ordered and will be distributed upon receipt.

United Way – East St. Louis: In 2020, United Way of Greater St. Louis carried out activities that set the foundation for developing a community-wide approach to supporting children, families, teachers, and other stakeholders up to and during the kindergarten transitions process. Activities and accomplishments centered around several types of initial planning, which included stakeholder engagement, a systems scan, and capacity development around kindergarten readiness systems building.

As part of United Way's planning, stakeholder engagement sessions were held with early learning and kindergarten teachers, school administrators, and a cross-sector strategy team. The strategy team, who is responsible for identifying tactics for creating a community-wide kindergarten transitions plan, met November 18 and December 16,

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2020. Initial teacher planning meetings, which provided spaces for 26 total educators to identify needs and potential solutions for 2021, were held on December 8 and December 10, 2020. Lastly, planning sessions with five administrators were held on December 15 and December 17, 2020 and helped to identify areas of alignment between teachers and administrators that can serve as a foundation for the development of 2021 goals and activities.

To begin the process of engaging families, United Way hired and conducted trainings for four family engagement consultants. In 2021, these consultants will lead community engagement that results in the development and implementation of the 2021 Kindergarten Transition plan. Their work will build off existing family leadership and engagement efforts that took place in 2020 as part of the Illinois Head Start Parent Cafés project under Activity Three. To further support this stakeholder engagement, United Way conducted a first round of community surveys to find out what other services may be needed in the community to support children's kindergarten readiness. The survey provides opportunities for family members and teachers to get involved in other ways as planning continues in 2021.

Austin Coming Together (ACT): ACT convened meetings with school district, community, and early childhood care stakeholders to plan and determine goals for kindergarten transition work. ACT worked with partner agency, Austin Childcare Providers Network (ACPN) to complete and revise the PDG B-5 K-Transition Program work plan for additional investment in the project with a private funder – A Better Chicago. This funding is to support the lead partner agency in ACPN's continued organizational development.

Business and Professional People for the Public Interest (BPI): BPI convened two planning meetings (December 9 and December 15) with teachers. The first meeting's objectives were to map out a yearlong transition plan for the upcoming year. The meeting also detailed teacher roles for the end of 2020 to ensure as smooth as possible transition into next quarter (Jan 2021). The December 15, 2020 meeting finalized the three common classroom practices that teachers will engage in for 2021 (trauma-sensitive practices, attendance, and family support) and included a discussion of possible PD topics for 2021. BPI also purchased and distributed Family Winter Learning Fun Bags to support family engagement and continued learning for families during winter break from school. During the two meetings, teachers determined what materials should go into the bags (for example, teachers wanted kids to have dry erase boards and magnetic alphabet letters at home). BPI distributed 200 bags to four schools and two centers.

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2. Problems

I/ECMHC Database, Orientation, and Reflective Practice

COVID-19 delays continue to impact work output; therefore, the professional development offerings (e.g. orientation delivery and annual retreat format) and tracking are being reformulated for virtual events. Due to a family emergency, Dr. Shivers was unable to present the second session of the retreat in October. Scheduling efforts are underway to confirm new date in 2021.

In the Database, in order to be listed on the searchable consultant database the consultant must first join the Gateways Registry. I/ECMHC staff raised a concern that since the Registry is designed primarily for individuals working in child care centers and homes, some of the questions and options did not make sense from a consultant perspective. INCCRRA staff walked through the application with I/ECMHC staff to show how questions would be answered by consultants. I/ECMHC staff suggested a "tip sheet" to assist consultants when they fill out the form to join the Gateways Registry. Creation of the tip sheet has delayed the release of the I/ECMHC searchable database application by a few weeks, and we were not able to meet the goal of having 50 consultants in the database by the end of the year. The tip sheet will be finalized by mid-January 2021 and will then be sent along with the application for the searchable database.

Collaborative Transition & Alignment from Birth to the Early Grades

The most impactful challenge for all four kindergarten transition vendors was the delay of contract execution. However, GOECD staff continued to meet with all four vendors/partners despite the delays, which allowed for discussion and ongoing planning of how to adjust workplans and expectations. COVID-19 also caused delays and barriers in the vendors' abilities to communicate and plan with several stakeholders, such as school administrators, teachers, and families. Some schools had to close due to increasing COVID-19 cases. When schools reopened, many administrators and teachers had to pivot their priorities to focus on new needs of students and families in maintaining health and safety. The adjustment of teaching and learning stretched educators and made additional engagement opportunities difficult.

Wabash Area Development (WADI): WADI planned to distribute end of year surveys (which would be used as mid-year surveys for the school), but as the program is just beginning and the families need time to work with the Conscious Discipline curriculum, it is not anticipated that the surveys and a full evaluation will be conducted until January 2021. A preliminary evaluation will be conducted and submitted identifying work so far. WADI's readiness luncheon could not be conducted this year due to delayed contract execution; however, it is planned for next year.

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United Way – East St. Louis: Due to problems with technology access and infrastructure in the program footprint as well as increased responsibilities for remote learning, many families found it difficult to engage in remote planning opportunities.

3. Significant findings and events

Coordinated Application, Eligibility, Enrollment

The Pilot originally sought to select five home visiting collaborative communities for the project. Applicants were assessed on a criterion assessing their readiness capacity, including the strength of the collaboration, capability of local implementation leadership team, and support of a backbone agency. As pilot participants would implement Integrated Intake and Referral System without funding or staffing support, it was essential that communities met all requirements. Illinois received a total of five applications. After review of applications and direct interviews with collaborations, four of the five collaborations met all the necessary requirements to implement the Integrated Intake and Referral System. Therefore, four community collaboratives were selected for the project instead of five as initially proposed in the project narrative.

4. Dissemination activities

Coordinated Application, Eligibility, Enrollment

For the selection process, a "Request for Support" application was released to Child Care Resource and Referral and Head Start/Early Head Start agencies that expressed interest in the project, and home visiting collaboratives that are voluntarily implementing coordinated intake or have expressed interest in coordinated intake. The application included an overview of the PDG B-5 program, the Pilot project, and the Integrated Intake and Referral System, as well as eligibility criteria for community capacity and readiness.

Collaborative Transition & Alignment from Birth to the Early Grades

Wabash Area Development (WADI): WADI created and sent out a launch video for staff and teachers. Surveys and information about Conscious Discipline were distributed to parents and families by teachers and home visitors during weekly, socially distant check-ins. Surveys are currently being executed with families, and family toolkits will be handed out with activity bags once survey is complete. Pre-surveys are complete for staff; some staff have completed the Conscious Discipline training and will be filling out post surveys soon.

United Way – East St. Louis: United Way created and disseminated a readiness flyer in their community that defines the kindergarten transition, outlines what readiness looks like, and highlights what families can do to support their children in being "ready". The materials also recruited families and teachers to complete a community survey and get involved in other forms of planning

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5. Other activities

Collaborative Transition & Alignment from Birth to the Early Grades

United Way – East St. Louis: United Way applied and was accepted to participate in the Parent Café work which is part of Activity Three.

6. Activities planned for the next reporting period

Coordinated Application, Eligibility, Enrollment

An orientation for the home visiting collaborative communities will launch the start of the project in late January through February. Each collaborative will begin regular consulting calls with the project lead and the University of Kansas. The leadership team from each community will also receive training on the use of the Integrated Intake and Referral System application.

I/ECMHC Database, Orientation, and Reflective Practice

In Q1 of 2021, we will: recruit participants across birth to five systems for the Orientation, Reflective Learning Groups (RLG), and entry into the Database; deliver an orientation event in March 2021; execute a Diversity Training request for proposal for the creation of a cost-effective training option to be delivered via a Training of Trainer model; continue to build RLG facilitator capacity; assess gaps/needs for additional RLGs; establish regularly scheduled updates/information sessions with statewide cadre of consultants; and implement, support, and maintain the statewide I/ECMH Consultant database through the Gateways Registry.

Collaborative Transition & Alignment from Birth to the Early Grades

Wabash Area Development (WADI): In Q1 of 2020: complete post surveys for staff and families; plan the school readiness meetings; work on getting CEU's for teachers for their training in Conscious Discipline; and distribute the transition backpacks with books and introductory activities for families.

United Way – East St. Louis: In Q1 of 2021: continue planning and implementing a stakeholder engagement process and begin to implement the 2021 Action Plan.

Austin Coming Together (ACT): In Q1 of 2021: continue engaging stakeholders in collaborative planning meetings to create an action plan. Partners will sign an Implementation Partner Commitment Letter and/or MOU once confirming their role/responsibilities and verbally committing to Phase 2 and/or 3. ACT and will work with partners to understand the particulars and parameters concerning the potential need to find and contract an independent evaluator for the project.

Business and Professional People for the Public Interest (BPI): In Q1 of 2021: complete the creation of a yearlong transition plan; distribute internal and external calendar of

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events for SY 2020/2021; train and begin work of the Family Liaison; begin to create and implement a communication plan for community partners and stakeholders; and convene

community partners and stakeholders to create a communication plan for the Altgeld-Riverdale community.