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**2015 Annual Legislative Report**

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Executive Summary

The Department of Early Education and Care was established in 2005 with a mission to provide "***the foundation that supports all children in their development as lifelong learners and contributing members of the community, and supports families in their essential work as parents and caregivers***."

Over the past decade the Department has made significant advancements in building a system of high-quality early education and care in Massachusetts. These advancements include the development and alignment of standards across age groups and with elementary education, the implementation of a program quality rating system, the establishment of regional workforce support and family engagement networks, and enhancements to program safety through the development of a differential licensing model and expansion of the Department's background record check process.

In 2014, the Board of Early Education and Care set a five year Strategic Plan for the Department that set the vision and priorities for the agency's work. This report provides an update on the Department's accomplishments and activities over the past year in each of the four areas of the Strategic Plan.

**Strategic Direction #1: All young children in the Commonwealth will be ready to enter the K-12 education system and be successful, and their families will be provided with opportunities to support their children’s cognitive, socio-emotional, language, and physical development.**

The Department of Early Education and Care licenses nearly 10,000 group child care centers, family child care homes, residential programs, and foster care/group placement agencies across the Commonwealth, that have the capacity to serve over 240,000 children. On a daily basis, EEC supports over 50,000 children from low-income or at-risk families to attend a high quality early education and care program. In FY15, EEC received $15M that provided 2,500 vouchers for children on the Income Eligible Child Care waitlist to enroll in an early education and care program. EEC received a $12M appropriation in the FY16 budget that will allow 1,700 children on the Income Eligible Child Care waitlist, and 600 children on the DCF Supportive Child Care waitlist, to enroll in an early education and care program. EEC is currently prioritizing the placement of homeless children from the Income Eligible waitlist.

EEC received $30M in Preschool Expansion Grant funding from the U.S. Department of Education to provide free preschool in five cities -- Springfield, Holyoke, Boston, Lawrence, and Lowell -- through partnerships between public school districts and community-based programs licensed by the Department of Early Education and Care. The funding supports the enrollment of 858 four-year-old children each year for a two-year period; the first cohort began in September 2015. Through funding appropriated in the FY16 state budget, in January 2016 EEC awarded "Commonwealth Preschool Partnership Initiative" grants to 13 communities to support them in identifying resources needed to offer increased levels of high quality preschool programming for low income children in their community who otherwise may not have access to a preschool experience, through a model similar to the Preschool Expansion Grant initiative.

In addition to providing access to formal early education and care, EEC supported informal early education opportunities through a range of partnerships and initiatives. In 2015, EEC funded 89 Coordinated Family and Community Engagement (CFCE) networks across the state to link families with educational opportunities and comprehensive services in their communities, in an effort to support children's development and readiness for school. Through Race to the Top -- Early Learning Challenge grant funds, EEC partnered with the WGBH Educational Foundation to develop *Resources for Early Learning*, a comprehensive, early childhood digital library featuring more than 2,500 free media-based tools specifically designed for families and educators to support young children's learning and development. EEC also partnered with Boston Children's Museum to develop and deliver training and resources to 171 children's museums and libraries across the state to enhance their capacity to offer developmentally appropriate learning opportunities for young children. The initiative focused on four key areas in supporting family and community engagement in child development: early literacy, Kindergarten readiness, STEM, and child development/"Brain Building".

**Strategic Direction #2: Programs offered in early childhood, out of school time settings licensed or license exempt by the EEC will promote and support the high quality education and healthy development of children that enables all children to be successful as school members and citizens.**

The Department has been working to develop a system of differential licensing that utilizes a limited number of indicators to determine programs' compliance with the full set of EEC's licensing regulations. The Department is working to institute this system of regulatory compliance in all Family Child Care, Large Group and School Age Child Care, and Residential and Placement programs. The goal of the differential licensing project is to increase the number of visits to licensed programs by decreasing the amount of time spent on each visit, which supports the Department's ability to make annual licensing visits to programs as required by the reauthorization of the Child Care Development Block Grant legislation. In 2015, EEC conducted a second pilot of the differential licensing process using a set of monitoring visit tools that were modified based on the results of the first pilot conducted in 2014. EEC finalized development of the licensing life cycles, monitoring visit tool and enhanced post-visit monitoring tools, and is developing a differential licensing handbook. EEC anticipates fully implementing the differential licensing model in 2016.

Since late January 2015 the Department has been working with the Executive Office of Education's Information Technology division to build a new licensing data system. The Licensing Education Analytic Database (LEAD) will provide a single system for licensing and investigation information, replacing the two existing systems -- Licensing Manager and Complaint Tracking System. LEAD will be a more robust system that follows the licensing process from beginning to end and houses all information related to the licensing process. Phase One roll out of LEAD began in January 2016. This roll out includes licensing investigations, mobile licensing visits and limited provider portal functionality.

In January 2016, the Department promulgated amendments to the regulations governing licensing or approval of residential programs (606 CMR 3.00). These amendments included changes to prohibit the use of prone, mechanical and medical restraints with certain exceptions, and to restrict the use of seclusion. Other changes to the regulations included new definitions for types of restraint, data analysis of the use and duration of restraints in facilities, goals for reducing or eliminating physical restraints, and new consent requirements. In addition, in 2015 the Department convened an adoption advisory committee to revise the regulations governing child placement and adoption. The committee solicited feedback from external stakeholders, conducted a review of other states' regulations and the Hague Convention's requirements for international adoption, and consulted with the Evan P. Donaldson Institute for Adoption, in drafting revisions to the regulations. The Department will bring the proposed amendments to the child placement and adoption regulations to the Board of Early Education and Care for review in 2016.

In 2015, EEC worked with the Community Economic Development Assistance Corporation (CEDAC) to administer $7.5 million in grant awards to ten agencies across the state to support facilities development and improvements in program settings that combined serve over 1,300 children. The Legislature authorized $4 million in the FY2016 budget for the Early Education and Care and Out-of-School Time (EEOST) Capital Fund, which will support a second round of grant awards to programs.

EEC awarded approximately $6.3 million in FY2016 Universal PreKindergarten Classroom Quality (UPK) grants to 184 preschool programs and a total of 524 classrooms serving 7,973 children (of which 5,730 are "high needs" children), through an open, competitive bid process. These 184 preschool programs consist of 98 center-based programs, 10 public school programs; and 76 system-affiliated family child care providers.

In 2015, EEC continued its implementation of the Quality Rating and Improvement System (QRIS), which supports educators, programs, and systems across the Commonwealth in engaging in a process of continuous quality improvement, in order to enhance outcomes for all children in Massachusetts, especially those populations most at risk. In the QRIS, quality is rated across four levels, with four being the highest level of quality. At the end of 2015, 6,035 programs were participating in the QRIS, a 7.3% increase from the previous year. EEC partnered with the University of Massachusetts Donahue Institute, and the Wellesley Centers for Women to conduct a validation study of the QRIS that examined variation of providers within QRIS levels and differentiation of quality between the four levels, and whether there is an association between QRIS level and child developmental outcomes. The findings were promising with regard to the system’s ability to distinguish quality among center-based providers and possible associations between QRIS quality levels and child developmental outcomes.

EEC also developed Pre-Kindergarten Science, Technology, and Engineering (STE) Learning Standards to inform the development of STE curricula in early education programs for preschool children from 2 years and 9 months of age through 5 years old. The standards align to the Science and Technology/Engineering Standards for preschool through grade 2 being revised by the Department of Elementary and Secondary Education (ESE). EEC also partnered with the Department of Elementary and Secondary Education to develop *Standards for Preschool and Kindergarten in the Domains of Social and Emotional Learning, and Approaches to Play and Learning,* that support competency development in young children that is essential for success in school and in relationships throughout life. The Social and Emotional Learning Domains focus on Self-Knowledge, Self-Management, Social Knowledge, Relationship Skills, and Responsible Decision-Making. The Approaches to Play and Learning Domains focus on Initiative, Curiosity, Engagement/Persistence, Creativity, Cooperative Play and Learning, Problem Solving, Organizational Skills, and Memory.

**Strategic Direction #3: The early childhood and out-of-school time workforce who works with children and families in the Commonwealth is professionally prepared, adequately compensated, and diverse.**

The Department continued its support of a workforce development system that helps increase program quality by building early educator competencies and establishing pathways that retain experienced and effective educators. EEC's five Educator and Provider Support (EPS) Networks across the state provided degree/career pathway supports such as coaching, mentoring, planning, and access to evidence-based professional development that aligns with EEC licensing regulations, EEC core competencies for early educators, Massachusetts' early learning guidelines, and the state's Quality Rating and Improvement System (QRIS) Standards. In 2015, over 2,000 educators accessed college coursework, and nearly 5,000 received coaching, academic advising, and career counseling support. Over 766 educators were approved for an Early Childhood Educator Scholarship in the 2015-16 academic year, that will fund the cost of up to six credits in the Fall 2015 term and up to six credits in the Spring 2016 term. In 2015, EEC supported a new cohort of students in completing the Post Master’s Certificate program in Early Education Research, Policy, and Leadership at University of Massachusetts Boston, as well as a new cohort of students in the Early Educators Fellowship Initiative (EEFI), which brings together leaders from public school districts and EEC-licensed programs to develop and implement partnerships in their community that will improve children's school readiness and school success.

EEC also continued to work with its state agency partners to strengthen the knowledge and capacity of providers who work with young children and their families. EEC and the Department of Public Health trained the Educator and Provider Support networks on a four part strength-based training seriesthat coveredtrauma in early childhood, family substance use, parent mental health, and exposure to violence. EEC worked with the Department of Public Health, the Department of Housing and Community Development, and Horizons for Homeless Children to train nearly 80 homeless shelter direct care providers on providing social and emotional supports to children and their families. EEC and the Office of Refugees and Immigrants (ORI) continued to offer the *“New Start: Supporting Multilingual Young Children and Immigrant and Refugee Families”* trainingto the Coordinated Family and Community Engagement networks, Child Care Resources and Referral Agencies (CCR&Rs), Family Child Care System Providers, Head Start programs, and ORI’s service providers. The trainings address cultural competency, child development and educational principles in the context of multilingual homes and multicultural environments.

**Strategic Direction #4: The Department and Board of Early Education and Care will provide leadership, direction and resources to meet the mission of the agency with utmost integrity, transparency and accountability to the people of the Commonwealth**

The FY16 General Appropriations Act (GAA) appropriated $550.8M for the Department's budget, which is $13.5M more than the total funding in FY15. EEC's FY16 budget provided maintenance or level funding for most accounts, but also included considerable investments in child care access and quality. The FY16 budget included $12M to serve new children off of the Income Eligible waitlist. It also included a structural change that allows Income Eligible Child Care funds to be transferred to the Supportive Child Care or Transitional Child Care accounts to cover any deficiencies in those accounts. Notable FY16 budget appropriations included a $1M increase for Head Start grants, a $4M earmark for program quality improvements aligned with the QRIS, $5M to support rate increases for providers who accept EEC child care subsidies, and $500K for the Commonwealth Preschool Partnership Initiative, which supports planning grants for communities to expand their preschool offerings.

In 2015, KPMG conducted a Single State Audit of EEC's Child Care Development Fund (CCDF) award, utilizing the OMB A-133 CCDF Audit Supplement for the review of State Fiscal Year 2015. This audit resulted in no findings. In April and May 2015, EEC held trainings on the regulations and policies governing transport of children in EEC-contracted and EEC-licensed programs. These trainings included presentations from EEC's Licensing, Legal, Background Record Check, and Audit units. Over 200 attendees from EEC's subsidized child care providers, Child Care Resource and Referral Agencies, and private transportation companies completed the training. EEC will hold another round of transportation trainings in April and May 2016.

In July 2015, EEC rolled out the Child Care Financial Assistance system (CCFA), a new single platform for managing subsidies provided to eligible families to enroll their child in an early education and care or out of school time program. In early August 2015, system performance issues arose as providers began submitting monthly attendance for billing purposes. EEC immediately implemented an Alternative Payment Method (APM) to ensure providers could be paid for their services on an estimated basis outside of the CCFA system. The billing module will be launched in early Spring 2016, with reconciliation of estimated payments to occur at that time. EEC is working closely with providers to support their use of the new system.

EEC completed the fourth year of the Race to the Top - Early Learning Challenge (RTT-ELC) grant program in 2015. This federal award provided $50M to Massachusetts to enhance the quality of our early education and care system in an effort to ensure that children are prepared for kindergarten and enter the K-12 system with a strong foundation for success. EEC utilized approximately $24.1M of the Race to the Top - Early Learning Challenge Grant funding for statewide infrastructure investment programs and $25.8M for direct community investment programs. These projects were carried out in partnership with local institutions of higher education, media outlets, private and public organizations, and our fellow state agencies with the shared goal of expanding and enhancing quality early education and care resources for the Commonwealth's youngest children and their families. The grant has helped to bring together this wide variety of sectors around a common goal of investing in our future. As we approach the end of the grant in 2016, EEC and its partners have been implementing strategies to sustain the key activities supported by RTTT-ELC past the end of the grant period.

As the Department moves ahead in 2016, the focus will be to continue to support improved outcomes for children and families through high quality early education opportunities.

Submission of Annual Report:

This reports satisfies the Board of Early Education and Care’s legislative reporting mandates, as codified in M.G.L. c. 15D, §§ 3(g), 4, 5, 10, and 13(d), to submit an annual report describing its progress in achieving the goals and implementing the programs authorized under Chapter 15D of the General Laws of the Commonwealth. The accomplishments and activities described in this report are for 2015.

(See Appendix A for the Legislative reporting language).

Mission of Department:

Much has been said about the Commonwealth's decision to create a first-of-its kind consolidated Department of Early Education and Care in 2005. This was an important achievement and the Commonwealth should take a measure of pride in the leadership that we exercised with this step, as it further cemented in practice what we have long recognized as family members and citizens: conditions for optimal learning start at birth - in fact, prenatally - and must be sustained by the Commonwealth's commitment to high-quality learning experiences for all children through their early education, K-12 and higher educations. This is the modern interpretation of the ideals and responsibilities embodied in the Massachusetts State Constitution - concepts so timeless that they forever speak to the present health and future prosperity of our Commonwealth and its people.

The Department of Early Education and Care was established with a mission to provide "***the foundation that supports all children in their development as lifelong learners and contributing members of the community, and supports families in their essential work as parents and caregivers***." Investments provided under recent state budgets have allowed Massachusetts to build on the foundation of the Department, but there is still considerable work to be done to establish a more perfect early education and care system for our children and families.

The Department licenses approximately 10,000 group child care centers and family child care homes across the Commonwealth. These providers support our children, families and economy with infant, toddler, preschool and school-age services. Programs are held to the strongest licensing regulations amongst states and an increasing number are participating within our Quality Rating and Improvement System (QRIS) to provide enhanced services through research-based measurements of program quality. With limited resources, we fund educator professional development and higher education scholarships, occasional salary rate increases and supports for programs to improve their level of quality. Importantly, the Department also licenses group residential and temporary shelters, foster care placement agencies and adoption agencies.

The Department administers financial assistance for children from low income families, and families receiving support from the Department of Children and Families or the Department of Transitional Assistance, to attend an early education program. In an effort to broadly support children and families, the Department funds early education and care programming in informal settings such as museums and libraries, and through our network of local Coordinated Family and Community Engagement grantees.

The Department is also responsible for leading the Commonwealth's efforts to seek and secure Federal grant opportunities - and in this regard, we have been successful, which is a testament to the leadership and commitment of our field of early educators, Department staff and the Commonwealth's legislative and executive branches. Each success has built toward the next and enabled the Commonwealth to methodically advance a system of increasingly higher quality despite the generally challenging economic climate and revenue environment of the past ten years.

The Department of Early Education and Care remains committed to building a comprehensive early learning system that provides all our children with the best chance for a prosperous future.

Governance:

The Department of Early Education and Care (EEC) is part of the Executive Office of Education, one of eight Executive Offices under Governor Charlie Baker. Education Secretary James A. Peyser oversees the Executive Office of Education and is Governor Baker's top advisor on education. The Commissioner of Early Education and Care, Thomas L. Weber, manages the Department of Early Education and Care.

An eleven member Board of Early Education and Care sets policies and regulations related to early education and care programs and services in the Commonwealth of Massachusetts. Education Secretary Peyser and the Secretary of Health and Human Services are ex-officio members of the Board of Early Education and Care; the other nine members are appointed by the Governor. Commissioner Weber is the Secretary to the Board. The members of the Board of Early Education and Care are:

**Nonie Lesaux, Ph.D, Chair**

**Juliana W. and William Foss Thompson Professor of Education and Society, Harvard University**

**At-large Representative**

James A. Peyser

Secretary, Executive Office of Education

Marylou Sudders

Secretary, Executive Office of Health and Human Services

Mary Walachy, Vice Chairperson - Executive Director of the Irene E. & George A. Davis Foundation

At-large Representative

Elizabeth Childs, M.D., M.P.A.

Appointed as psychologist recognized for research in field of educational psychology

Joni Block - Grant Specialist, Brockton Public Schools

Appointed as an early education and care teacher

Sharon Scott-Chandler, Esq. - Executive Vice President, Action for Boston Community Development

Appointed as early education and care provider with management and administrative experience

Jondavid “J.D.” Chesloff - Executive Director, Massachusetts Business Roundtable

Appointed as business representative with demonstrated commitment in education

Joan Wasser Gish, Esq. - Director of Strategic Initiatives, Boston College

At-large Representative

Eleonora Villegas-Reimers, Ed.D. - Associate Professor at Wheelock College

Appointed as an expert in evaluation and assessment of pre-schools

Kathleen C. Joyce - Public Affairs and State Relations Lead, Shire

Appointed as a parent of a child receiving early education and care services

The Board of Early Education and Care meets monthly from September to June each year. The meetings are open to the public and include 30 minutes for public testimony. The Board holds most meetings in the EEC Boston office, however, in 2015 the Board also held meetings in Framingham (March 10, 2015), Fall River (May 12, 2015), and Fitchburg (November 10, 2015), to allow for greater participation of stakeholders across the state. The EEC Board held its yearly retreat on August 31, 2015 and focused the discussion on the Board's priorities and issues, the Department's priorities and initiatives, the Five Year Strategic Plan for the Department, and Board governance.

Beginning in FY16, the EEC Board revised its committee structure to be comprised of an Oversight Committee that meets monthly, and *ad hoc* working groups that meet as needed to address specific objectives that support the agency and are guided by the larger strategic goals of the Board. The *ad hoc* working groups analyze relevant data and provide proposals and recommendations to the Department. The Oversight Committee reviews EEC budget-related activities that are brought to the Board for discussion and decision making, and supports EEC’s efforts to implement a system to improve and support quality statewide and to offer an array of high quality, comprehensive, and affordable programs designed to meet the diverse and individual needs of children and families. Board Member Elizabeth Childs, M.D., chairs the Oversight Committee.

In accordance with M.G.L. c. 15D, §3A there is also an Advisory Council on early education and care. The EEC Advisory Council is comprised of representatives from the early childhood, K-12, and higher education sectors; civic, labor, and business communities; social service agencies; health care providers; and parent organizations. EEC's Advisory Council members represent a geographic balance of the state and reflect the diversity of the Commonwealth in race, ethnicity, gender and sexual orientation. All appointees have a special expertise or interest in high-quality early childhood education and care. The Advisory Council may review and offer comments on any rules or regulations before promulgation by the Board of Early Education and Care, and may, from time to time, make recommendations to the Board that it considers appropriate for changes and improvements in early education and care programs and services. The EEC Advisory Council met four times in 2015, and reviewed the QRIS Continuous Quality Improvement plan, interagency partnerships, workforce support, and the Child Care and Development Fund State Plan.

Statutory Responsibilities and Strategic Directions:

The Department of Early Education and Care (EEC) is the lead agency for all early education and care services and funding in the Commonwealth. EEC is the state education agency for the purposes of early education and care services under federal law and is responsible for compliance with early education and care services under the federal Personal Responsibility and Work Opportunity Reconciliation Act of 1996 (Pub. L. 104-193). EEC's statutory obligations include:

* Seeking federal funds for early education and care services;
* Licensing or approval of early education and care programs, group care facilities, adoption and placement agencies, school-aged child care programs, and temporary shelter facilities;
* Establishing provider rates and participant fees for EEC-licensed programs;
* Implementing a number of programs and administering any related grant awards;
* Providing ongoing program monitoring to ensure quality as well as adherence to regulations and standards;
* Providing Technical Assistance to providers and potential providers;
* Facilitating the development of the EEC workforce and, when appropriate, providing training and Professional Development;
* Maintaining an educator database and comprehensive waitlist of children expressing interest in services;
* Providing family education in English and other, commonly spoken languages when available and;
* Addressing infant and toddler needs, including parent education, early literacy services, and informal developmental opportunities.

The EEC Board's Strategic Plan[[1]](#footnote-1) for the Department of Early Education and Care focuses on four key areas:

1. All young children in the Commonwealth will be ready to enter the K-12 education system and be successful, and their families will be provided with opportunities to support their children’s cognitive, socio-emotional, language, and physical development.
2. Programs offered in early childhood and out of school time settings licensed or license-exempt by the EEC will promote and support the high quality education and healthy development of children that enables all children to be successful as school members and citizens.
3. The early childhood and out-of-school time workforce who works with children and families in the Commonwealth is professionally prepared, adequately compensated, and diverse.
4. The Department and Board of Early Education and Care will provide leadership, direction and resources to meet the mission of the agency with utmost integrity, transparency and accountability to the people of the Commonwealth.

Progress in 2015:

This report summarizes EEC's activities in 2015 as required by law, and progress in each of the four Strategic Directions for the Department.

**STRATEGIC DIRECTIONS / FIVE-YEAR GOALS**

**Strategic Direction #1: All young children in the Commonwealth will be ready to enter the K-12 education system and be successful, and their families will be provided with opportunities to support their children’s cognitive, socio-emotional, language, and physical development.**

*Child Care Financial Assistance*

The Department of Early Education and Care provides financial assistance for children from eligible families to attend high quality early education and care programs. EEC subsidizes approximately 56,000 children from birth to age 14 (up to age 16 for children with a special need) in settings across EEC's mixed delivery system of care, which includes center-based programs, family child care homes, public preschool programs, and Head Start/Early Head Start classrooms. Together these programs have the capacity to serve over 240,000 children.

The three major state funding programs for child care financial assistance that EEC administers are Income Eligible Child Care, Supportive Child Care, and Transitional Child Care. The Income Eligible Child Care program provides child care financial assistance for low-income families with a service need, on a first come/first served basis. The Supportive Child Care Program provides child care placements for families who are receiving or at risk of receiving, protective services through the Department of Children and Families (DCF). Protective services include foster care; a physical, mental, emotional or medical condition; or participation in a drug treatment or rehabilitation program. The Transitional Child Care Program provides child care vouchers for families receiving Transitional Aid to Families with Dependent Children (TAFDC) cash assistance and participating in the Employment Services Program, or who are in the 12 month period after close of their TAFDC benefits. (See Appendix C for the number of children served through these child care financial assistance programs.)

The Income Eligible Child Care Program also funds two specific types of care: Teen Parent Child Care and Homeless Child Care for families residing in homeless shelters affiliated with the Department of Housing and Community Development (DHCD); or domestic violence shelters and substance abuse shelters affiliated with DCF. On average per month in 2015, 624 children residing in shelters and/or hotels were enrolled in an EEC-contracted early education and care program. (See Appendix C for child care caseload data.)

*Waitlist Remediation*

The Department received a third straight year of funding to remediate the waitlist for child care through a $12M appropriation in the FY16 budget, that will allow 1,700 children on the Income Eligible Child Care waitlist, and 600 children on the DCF Supportive Child Care waitlist, to enroll in an early education and care program. EEC is prioritizing the placement of homeless children from the Income Eligible waitlist. This funding builds upon the $30M total received for waitlist remediation in FY14 and FY15, that allowed nearly 5,700 children to enroll in an early education and care program from the Income Eligible Child Care waitlist. (See Appendix D for waitlist data.)

*Child Care Resource and Referral Improved Services to Families and Providers in Massachusetts*

In 2015, the Department of Early Education and Care continued its partnership with seven (7) Child Care Resource and Referral Agencies (CCR&R) across the state to administer child care financial assistance and assist families seeking care. The CCR&Rs issue vouchers for siblings of children currently in care, eligible military families, and families that are on the waitlist for Income Eligible Child Care. The CCR&Rs have also been a critical piece of the rollout of the new Child Care Financial Assistance System (CCFA) by providing feedback to the Department throughout the development and launch of the system, as well as providing technical assistance on CCFA to providers.

*Preschool Expansion Grant*

The Department of Early Education and Care received a federal Preschool Expansion Grant that funds a year of free, high-quality preschool for low-income four-year-old children, through partnerships between public school districts and community-based programs licensed by the Department of Early Education and Care. Massachusetts applied for up to $60 million over four years ($15 million per year) under the federal Preschool Expansion Grantprogram, which is administered by the U.S. Department of Education, and received its full request for $15 million for the first year of the grant, and its full request for $15 million for the second year of the grant. Five Massachusetts cities are participating in the Preschool Expansion Grant program: Springfield, Holyoke, Boston, Lawrence and Lowell. Up to 858 four-year old children in these communities who otherwise would not have had an early education experience prior to entering Kindergarten will attend preschool in the 2015-2016 school year. It is expected that the $15 million award for year two of the grant will support the same number of four-year-old children (up to 858) to be enrolled in the second cohort during the 2016-2017 school year.

The Preschool Expansion Grant funds support high quality program offerings through required design elements such as inclusive full-day and full-year programming with low child-to-teacher ratios (10:1 or less); workforce development supports for educators, including individualized growth plans, joint professional development between the school district and community early education programs, and coaching and mentoring; and use of highly credentialed educators who are compensated at a rate comparable to public school district salaries. The classes provide programming for the children from 8 to 10 hours per day. A longitudinal study is a key component of the Preschool Expansion Grant and will track the implementation, impact and costs of the services provided in the participating communities.

*Preschool Expansion Grant -- Longitudinal Study*

The Department of Early Education and Care is contracting with Abt Associates to conduct a longitudinal evaluation of the programs funded by the Preschool Expansion Grant. This evaluation is designed to learn from the communities implementing the Preschool Expansion Grant grant, support quality improvement at the local level, and inform decisions about sustaining and expanding programs and policies developed through this grant. The evaluation includes four components: 1) an implementation study, 2) a longitudinal study of children's school success in elementary school, 3) an impact evaluation, including impacts in elementary school, and 4) a cost study. Abt Associates will gather qualitative data from parents, educators, administrators and coaches about program implementation and challenges, conduct formal observations of classrooms to identify the quality of teacher-child interactions, and assess a sample of children in each program in multiple domains of development. Program information, including classroom quality, will be gathered from grant-funded classrooms and from a comparison sample of classrooms during the grant period, and the study will follow the children into elementary school. An impact evaluation will begin in the second year and will utilize a research design that allows for causal estimates of the effects of grant-funded programs, both at the end of the preschool year as well as at the end of Kindergarten and First Grade. Abt Associates will provide data on the implementation, effectiveness and costs of the programs being funded to inform program improvement and mid-course adjustments.

*Commonwealth Preschool Partnership Initiative - State Planning Grant*

Through funding appropriated in EEC's FY16 state budget, EEC awarded grant funding to 13 communities who are currently providing pre-school programs in their community, to identify resources needed to offer increased levels of high quality preschool programming similar to the federal Preschool Expansion Grant model, for low income children in their community who otherwise may not have access to a preschool experience. The Commonwealth Preschool Partnership Initiative - State Planning Grant awards support these communities in developing strategic plans that address the following:

* Leadership, including partnerships between public schools and early education programs,
* Program design and development, including elements of their current infrastructure that would need to be enhanced in order to meet required quality elements, and
* Costs: including the amount of funds that would be needed to develop high quality programming, and the resources that are available through public and private sources to sustain the expanded high quality preschool services in the long term.

*The 13 grantees and their award amounts are:*

Athol $22,000

Brockton $40,000

Cape Cod $39,000

Fall River $40,000

*Holyoke\* $40,000*

*Lawrence\* $39,000*

*Lowell\* $40,000*

New Bedford $40,000

North Adams $40,000

Pittsfield $40,000

*Springfield\* $40,000*

Somerville $40,000

Worcester $40,000

\*Current participant in the Preschool Expansion Grant program.

*Inclusive Preschool Program*

The Inclusive Preschool Learning Environments Grant (formerly known as Chapter 188/Phase I of CPC) is designed to support inclusive preschool learning environments serving preschool-age children with disabilities in early education and care settings with their same-aged peers without disabilities. The priorities of the grant include supporting program capacity to offer inclusive preschool learning environments in center-based programs and public school preschool programs; and enhancing program quality through program participation in the Massachusetts Quality Rating and Improvement System (QRIS). In FY15, EEC awarded 92 grants totaling $9M for programs to provide inclusive preschool learning environments in 118 communities serving 5,857 children through the Commonwealth (2,069 children with disabilities and 3,788 children without disabilities.) The majority of these grantees were public school preschool programs.

*Head Start State Collaboration Project*

Head Start is a federally-funded grant provides early education and care programs for children from low income families to support their readiness for school at Kindergarten entry. Head Start programs serve children from three to five years of age, and Early Head Start programs serve children from birth up to age three. Massachusetts received a five-year grant award from the U.S. Department of Health and Human Services' Administration for Children and Families (ACF) to participates in the federal Head Start State Collaboration Project. The Department of Early Education and Care is the lead state agency for Massachusetts' grant award, and houses the Head Start State Collaboration Office. In FY2015, the national Office of Head Start (OHS) identified six new priorities for the work of the Head Start State Collaboration Offices:

1. Partner with State Child Care Systems to emphasize the Early Head Start and Child Care Partnerships Initiative;
2. Assist with State efforts to collect data on early childhood programs and child outcomes;
3. Support the expansion of and access to high quality programs, workforce supports, and career development;
4. Collaborate with States' Quality Rating Improvement Systems;
5. Work with schools systems to ensure continuity, and
6. Promote State and Regional priorities such as Dual Language Learners, Financial Education, Serving Children with Disabilities; Parent, Family, and Community Engagement; and public and private partnerships.

This year marks the last year of the current award cycle. Massachusetts is eligible to apply for $1.1 million for the next five year grant award period (2016-2021). Massachusetts' Head Start Collaboration Office is in the process of conducting a needs assessment of the state's Head Start and Early Head Start programs, and is conducting stakeholder meetings to inform the grant application, which is due to ACF and OHS by April 1, 2016.

*Head Start State Supplemental Grant*

EEC administers the state-funded Head Start State Supplemental Grant program, which provides funding to 30 Head Start and Early Head Start agencies in Massachusetts to ensure that children and families have access to the full array of Head Start services. The FY16 budget appropriation of $9.1M supports the following activities:

* Enhancing the programs' capacity to serve over 200 state-funded children and offer them Head Start services;
* Increasing the professional development opportunities available to staff;
* Using Head Start State Supplemental funds to support staff salaries;
* Enhancing program quality by continuing to require 100 % participation of Head Start and Early Head Start center-based and family child care programs to participate in the Quality Rating Improvement System (QRIS);
* Providing non-federal matching funds for programs (which are the only EEC funds which can be used for matching federal funds); and
* Supporting Head Start and Early Head Start approaches to school readiness to ensure that children are ready for school, families are ready to support their children's learning, and schools are ready for children.

*Early Childhood Mental Health*

The Department Early Education and Care has provided funding for early childhood mental health consultation services since 2008. EEC awarded $1.25 million in both fiscal years 2015 and 2016 to six agencies to provide mental health consultation services across the Commonwealth through the Mental Heath Consultation Grant program. The consultation services offered through this grant program include mental health supports, strategies, and services that address the developmental, emotional, and behavioral challenges of infants and young children and their families, help ensure children's healthy social-emotional development, and promote children's success in school. The services provided through the grant are also intended to reduce the rate of suspensions and expulsions in early education and care settings. The current Mental Health Consultation grantees are listed below. (See Appendix E for additional information about Early Mental Health Consultation Services.)

|  |  |  |  |
| --- | --- | --- | --- |
| **FY2016 Grantees** | **Amount Awarded** | **Region** | **Cities and Towns Served** |
| Behavioral Health Network | $280,241 | Western | 102 |
| Community Healthlink | $175,596 | Central | 65 |
| Enable, Inc. | $155,315 | Northeast, Metrowest, Southeast | 60 |
| Justice Resource Institute, Inc. | $225,843 | Southeast, Cape and Islands | 69 |
| MSPCC | $267,685 | Northeast | 50 |
| The Home for Little Wanderers | $145,320 | Metro Boston | 5 |
| **Total**  | **$1,250,000** |  | **351** |

*Resources for Early Learning -*

Through Race to the Top -- Early Learning Challenge grant funds, EEC partnered with the WGBH Educational Foundation to develop *Resources for Early Learning*, a comprehensive, early childhood digital library featuring more than 2,500 free media-based tools for teaching and learning. With a strong focus on English Language Arts (ELA) and Science, Technology, Engineering, and Math (STEM), *Resources for Early Learning* features a comprehensive digital preschool curriculum, video-centered professional development modules, and resources for parents. By developing, disseminating, and facilitating the use of a robust set of media-based curricular resources, the overarching goal was to build the capacity of preschool classroom teachers and family child care providers to promote the growth of young children, and to support and engage parents in their role as their child’s first teacher. In 2015, WGBH focused on three primary areas of activity related to *Resources for Early Learning*:

* **Trainings and Presentations:** WGBH conducted various trainings and presentations on *Resources for Early Learning*, both online and in person, to more than 300 early childhood educators throughout the state. The goal of these trainings and presentations was to introduce early childhood educators to this vast digital library and to promote media literacy and the use of developmentally-appropriate digital tools in classrooms and at home.
* **Text Message Campaign:** WGBH continued to create and deploy weekly text messages for parents, in English and Spanish, with timely information and links to online educational resources.
* **Marketing Campaign:** WGBH developed and managed a marketing campaign, doubling the number of *Resources for Early Learning* users from October 2014 to October 2015. The campaign featured the development and distribution of thousands of copies of posters, in English and Spanish, featuring: QR codes that take educators and parents directly to fun and educational activities on *Resources for Early Learning;* direct emails promoting the website; social media posts with links to the site; and banner ads in parenting publications.

*Coordinated Family and Community Engagement/Parent Child Home Program*

Since its inception in FY10, the primary role of the Coordinated Family and Community Engagement (CFCE) grant has been to identify, engage and support high needs families not involved in the formal mixed delivery system of early education and care. By linking these families to educational opportunities and comprehensive services in their communities, they will be better equipped to support their child's development and readiness for school. There are currently 89 CFCE grantees who serve 348 cities and towns across the Commonwealth. These CFCE networks act as a community-based information and resource hub for families with young children, especially those with multiple risk factors and/or are hard to reach, in order to increase their knowledge of and accessibility to high-quality early education and care programs and services. The priorities of the CFCE grant include: 1) universal and targeted outreach to families; 2) linkages for families to comprehensive services that support family well-being and children's optimal development; 3) educational opportunities about child development and parent-child activities that promote language and literacy skills, and 4) coordination of activities and community-based resources that promote successful birth to eight transitions, with a specific focus on Kindergarten. In addition, the CFCE grant supports program quality by providing early education and out-of -school time programs with referrals to a range of local resources that meet the needs of children and families. The CFCE networks create linkages between educators and providers on the local level to professional development supports and opportunities available through EEC’s statewide system of educator and provider support.

Thirty of the CFCE grantees provide Parent-Child Home Program (PCHP) services. PCHP is a parenting, early literacy, and school readiness program designed to help strengthen families through verbal interaction and educational play between parents and their young children. Services are delivered to high need families through intensive home visits. Community-based early literacy specialists visit each family twice a week for two program cycles over a two-year period (typically two school calendar years), starting when a child is between 18 months and 30 months, and ending when the child enters the pre-kindergarten year. Over the course of the program, every family receives at least 24 books and 22 educational toys/materials. EEC served approximately 700 children and families with PCHP in 2015.

*Family Engagement Partnership with Children's Museums and Libraries*

With the support of Race to the Top - Early Learning Challenge grant funds, in 2015 Boston Children's Museum developed and delivered training and resources to 171 museums and libraries across the Commonwealth to enhance their capacity to offer developmentally-appropriate learning opportunities to young children. This initiative focused on four key areas in supporting family and community engagement in children's development: early literacy; Kindergarten readiness; Science, Technology, Engineering and Math (STEM) education; and child development/"Brain Building". All of the resources developed for this project are available online (http://www.bostonchildrensmuseum.org/learning-resources/race-to-the-top) and include family resources in multiple languages. Key to the success of this initiative was the engagement of the CFCE networks, who acted as collaborators with the libraries and museums and acted as community connectors for families, linking them to these learning activities.

*Child Screening/Ages and Stages Questionnaire*

In support of finding new ways to identify children who could benefit from additional resources to succeed, the Coordinated Family and Community Engagement (CFCE) networks utilize the Ages and Stages Questionnaire (ASQ) developmental screening tool to provide parents and families with information about their child's progress across five developmental domains. If the child's ASQ scores are below a specified cutoff, CFCE staff provide the family with referrals to other supports, such as Early Intervention and public preschool special education, as well as information on activities that may help support their child's development. For calendar year 2015, there were 896 ASQ screenings completed by CFCE grantees as indicated in their quarterly reporting. Additionally, there were 1,518 screenings entered into the ASQ Online data system, which EEC manages for all of the CFCE grantees.

*Massachusetts Kindergarten Entry Assessment (MKEA)*

To promote alignment between early and elementary education, EEC is working with the Department of Elementary and Secondary Education (ESE) and the Collaborative for Educational Services (CES) to train and support preschool and kindergarten educators in public schools to successfully use observational formative assessment in their classrooms. Currently 168 school districts are participating in the Massachusetts Kindergarten Entry Assessment (MKEA) project. Of these districts, 146 are using *GOLD*™ by Teaching Strategies®, four are using Work Sampling System®, and 18 are using an alternate observational tool/frameworkthat at a minimum addresses children's social-emotional and cognitive development domains.[[2]](#footnote-2) Together the districts assessed approximately 44,000 kindergarten during the fall of 2015. They will conduct the final assessments of the children for the school year by June 2016.

There is a comprehensive support system in place to support school districts in successfully implementing MKEA. This support system includes state-wide conferences and regional meetings, professional learning communities, webinars, district-level training and technical assistance, and funding for substitute coverage while teachers attend professional development trainings and/or spend time learning to use the observational formative assessment tool in the classroom.

**Strategic Direction #2: Programs offered in early childhood and out of school time settings licensed or license-exempt by the EEC will promote and support the high quality education and healthy development of children that enables all children to be successful as school members and citizens.**

*Differential Licensing*

The Department has been working to develop a Differential Licensing system for monitoring programs that uses a limited number of regulatory indicators which have been proven to be statistically significant in determining program's compliance with the full set of licensing regulations. The Department is working to institute a differential licensing system for all types of EEC licenses: Family Child Care, Large Group and School Age Child Care, Residential Programs, and Foster Care/Group Placement Agencies. The goal of Differential Licensing is to increase the number of visits to licensed programs by decreasing the amount of time spent on each visit. Currently EEC licensors' caseloads are significantly higher than the national average and what is recommended by national accrediting bodies. By decreasing the amount of time spent on visits, the Department, even with high caseloads, anticipates being able to make annual licensing visits as required by the reauthorized Child Care Development Block Grant Legislation. The mission statement and Guiding Principles for the Differential Licensing initiative are:

***Mission Statement:***

To ensure the health and safety of children and quality of early education and care programs through a differential licensing model that increases monitoring frequency and tailors visits based on program needs while supporting an effective allocation of EEC resources and technical assistance.

***Guiding Principles:***

* **Conduct** at least one visit to all programs annually
* **Strengthen collaboration** between EEC and stakeholder agencies with the goal of clear and consistent communication, and sharing program data
* **Serve** as a resource for programs to encourage the sharing and reinforcement of best practices
* **Tailor** interventions through improved licensing practices and processes resulting in increased program compliance, efficiency, effectiveness, and quality
* **Promote compliance** through program visits and an informed use of data to assess the program's compliance and determine an individualized approach
* **Increase efficiency** through improved licensing administration and management
* **Increase effectiveness** through development of an integrated IT system that allows for mobility, real time data and visibility into EEC and other collateral agencies core functions
* **Promote quality** through the use of a monitoring tool based on key indicators of risk to children

From May to June of 2015 a second pilot of the differential licensing process was conducted using a set of monitoring visit tools that were modified based on the results of the first pilot conducted in 2014. Providers were chosen on a random basis for unannounced visits (with the exception of residential and placement programs where semi-announced visits were conducted.) Over a five week period, 16 licensors visited 73 providers. Feedback and data on the pilot visits was collected through a follow-up survey for each licensor and supervisor for every visit conducted, a telephone follow-up survey with each provider visited, and through discussions with EEC leadership. This feedback indicated that providers found the visits to be less intrusive than previously, and that the visits were more targeted, thorough, and collaborative. Ninety-three percent of licensors rated the process very positively. In addition, a review of licensing histories for those providers who participated in the first pilot was conducted. Of the 117 providers seen during the first pilot, only three had substantiated complaints or other regulatory violations noted during the six months between the first pilot in 2014 and the second pilot in 2015. EEC has finalized the monitoring visit tool, the enhanced monitoring tools, and the licensing life cycle schedule for the differential licensing model, and is developing a differential licensing handbook. EEC anticipates implementing the differential licensing model during early 2016.

*LEAD: Licensing Education Analytic Database*

Since late January 2015 the Department has been working with the Executive Office of Education's Information Technology division to build a new licensing data system. The Licensing Education Analytic Database (LEAD) will provide a single system for licensing and investigation information, replacing the two existing licensing data systems: Licensing Manager and Complaint Tracking System. LEAD will be a more robust system that follows the licensing process from beginning to end and houses all information related to the licensing process. LEAD will ultimately contain the following elements:

* A cloud based interface on the Salesforce platform to house all of EEC's licensing business processes. The interface can be accessed by EEC staff people either at the office or remotely.
* A mobile tablet visit mode to allow for all visit results to be immediately captured and communicated to providers.
* Reports and dashboards for EEC executives, managers, supervisors, investigators and licensors to easily monitor the status of the licensing work.
* A provider portal, which will allow providers to interact with EEC electronically. They will be able to conduct licensing transactions such as applying for a license, filing required reports with EEC, reporting incidents, and responding to visit or investigation findings.
* A parent portal, which will provide information about licensed early education and care programs to parents and allow parents to share concerns with EEC.
* Program quality and workforce certification information from EEC's Quality Rating and Improvement System (QRIS) and Professional Qualifications systems.

LEAD is being built in sections and will be rolled out as functionality is completed. EEC licensing staff have played a major role in overseeing the development of the LEAD system from a business process perspective. Functionality has been developed on the licensing visit process, the licensing investigation process, and the provider portal. Phase one of the LEAD roll out began in January 2016 and included licensing investigations, mobile licensing visits and limited provider portal functionality. Phase two roll out will include the family child care licensing application processes and differential licensing processes across all of licensing. Phase three will contain the rest of the licensing processes. Dates for phase two and three have yet to be determined, but will occur in summer 2016.

*Comprehensive Review of Licensing Practices and Policies*

In January 2016, the Department promulgated amendments to the regulations governing licensing or approval of residential programs (606 CMR 3.00). These amendments included changes to prohibit the use of prone, mechanical and medical restraints with certain exceptions, and to restrict the use of seclusion. Other changes to the regulations included new definitions for types of restraint, data analysis of the use and duration of restraints in facilities, goals for reducing or eliminating physical restraints, and new consent requirements. In addition, in 2015 the Department convened an adoption advisory committee to revise the regulations governing child placement and adoption. The committee solicited feedback from external stakeholders, conducted a review of other states' regulations and the Hague Convention's requirements for international adoption, and consulted with the Evan P. Donaldson Institute for Adoption, in drafting revisions to the regulations. The Department will bring the proposed amendments to the child placement and adoption regulations to the Board of Early Education and Care for review in 2016.

*Background Records Checks*

EEC's background records check process includes four checks: a Criminal Offender Record Information (CORI) check, a Sex Offender Record Information (SORI) check, a check of the Department of Children and Families' (DCF) Registry of Alleged Perpetrators, and a fingerprint-based check of the national and state criminal history databases. EEC is working towards fulfilling its legislative mandate of having all required individuals fingerprinted by September 2016. In October 2014, the federal Child Care Development Block Grant (CCDBG) reauthorization was passed requiring EEC to complete four additional checks by September 2017. The additional checks include: National Criminal Information Center check, a check of the criminal database in all states where applicants resided in the previous five years, a child welfare check in all states where an applicant resided in the previous five years, and National Sex Offender Registry check. The Department has been challenged by inadequate infrastructure for processing required background records checks. EEC utilizes two legacy systems for its CORI and DCF checks, and has developed a number of patches and workarounds to allow our existing databases to accept and store SORI and fingerprint suitability results. With assistance from EOE IT, EEC decreased the wait time for approval of a potential hire for a child care or residential program from four to six weeks in 2014 to two weeks in 2015. EEC's Background Record Check (BRC) Unit processed the following number of background record checks in 2015:

* 78,957 CORI checks;
* 77,864 DCF checks;
* 79,397 SORI checks; and
* 32,269 fingerprint checks.

In addition, during the past year the Department has conducted on a monthly basis a cross-reference of the addresses of EEC's licensed child care facilities with the addresses of registered sex offenders maintained by the Sex Offender Registry Board. When the analysis of the databases results in a match, the Department investigates the address to ensure that a registered sex offender is not located at an address where early education services are being provided. EEC will work an outside consultant and EOE IT to further improve the background record check process over the course of the next year.

*Early Education and Care and Out-of-School Time (EEOST) Capital Fund Grants*

In 2013, An Act Financing the Production and Preservation of Housing for Low and Moderate Income Residents established a capital fund for grants to support facilities development and improvement of large group and school age early education programs licensed by the Department of Early Education and Care. The legislation that established the capital fund provided $45 million in general obligation bond funding over five years.

The Community Economic Development Assistance Corporation (CEDAC) was selected to administer the funds. In January 2015, EEC and CEDAC announced $7.5 million in grant awards statewide to support facilities development and improvements in large group and school age early education and care programs that lead to higher program quality settings for over 1,300 children, increased capacity to serve an additional 231 children, and the creation of 160 jobs during the grant period. All of the programs selected to receive an Early Education and Care and Out-of-School Time (EEOST) grant award serve publicly subsidized families, have demonstrated financial need, and have secured additional funding to pay for a portion of their project costs. The applicants selected for an EEOST grant award demonstrated sound feasibility of project, readiness for implementation, and likely potential for long-term sustainability and success. The projects ranged from the building of a completely new facility to extensive renovations of existing facilities to the replacement of major systems, such as heating and air conditioning, in existing buildings. The 2015 EEOST grantees and their award amounts are listed below:

|  |  |  |
| --- | --- | --- |
| **Lead Agency** | **Service Area** | **Award** |
| Beverly Children's Learning Center | Beverly | $1,000,000 |
| Catholic Charitable Bureau of the Archdiocese | Lynn | $750,000 |
| Community Teamwork, Inc | Lowell | $500,000 |
| Ellis Memorial & Eldredge House Inc | Boston | $800,000 |
| For Kids Only | Revere | $400,000 |
| Markman Children's Programs Inc | Attleboro | $1,000,000 |
| Merrimack Valley YMCA | Lawrence | $800,000 |
| Tri-Community YMCA | Southbridge | $800,000 |
| United Teen Equality Center Inc | Lowell | $400,000 |
| Valley Opportunity Council | Chicopee | $1,000,000 |

The Legislature authorized $4 million in the FY2016 budget for the EEOST Capital Fund, which will support a second round of grant awards. Twenty-three pre-applications were submitted for a Round Two grant award. EEC and CEDAC invited 16 of them to submit a full application, based on the readiness of their proposals. The full applications were due on January 25 2016, and EEC received 16 applications. EEC anticipates making conditional grant awards by May 2016.

*Universal Pre-Kindergarten Classroom Quality (UPK) Grant*

One of the grant programs that the Department of Early Education and Care uses to improve the quality of programming for children in the Commonwealth is the Universal PreKindergarten Classroom Quality (UPK) Grant. The UPK grant is awarded to programs across the mixed-delivery system of early education and care and aids in the state's efforts to improve the quality of child care programs in all communities. This grant program supports the ability of preschool programs to:

* Promote the early learning guidelines to support school readiness and positive outcomes for children participating in UPK classrooms and homes;
* Enhance the quality of services for children in UPK classrooms and family child care homes, especially for high needs children and/or children living in underperforming school districts;
* Maximize parent choice by ensuring participation from all program types within a mixed public and private service delivery system;
* Use child evidence-based formative assessment systems/tools to ensure that programs are effectively measuring children’s progress across all developmental domains and using this information to inform practice through individualized teaching; and
* Serve as models of excellence, engage in communities of practice, and support the process of continuous quality improvement across the Commonwealth.

In FY 2016, EEC awarded approximately $6.3 million in UPK grants through an open and competitive process to 184 preschool programs and a total of 524 classrooms serving 7,973 children (of which 5,730 are "high needs" children). These 184 preschool programs consist of 98 center-based programs, 10 public school programs; and 76 system-affiliated family child care providers.

*Quality Rating and Improvement System (QRIS)*

EEC has developed a Quality Rating and Improvement System (QRIS) to support educators, programs, and systems across the Commonwealth to engage in a process of continuous quality improvement, in order to enhance outcomes for all children in Massachusetts, especially those populations most at risk. In the QRIS, program quality is measured across five areas of standards: Curriculum and Learning; Safe, Healthy Indoor and Outdoor Environments; Workforce Qualifications and Professional Development; Family and Community Engagement; and Leadership, Management and Administration. Quality is rated across four levels, with four being the highest level of quality. At the end of 2015, 6,035 programs were participating in the QRIS. Of these programs, 5,412 had a QRIS rating level confirmed by EEC, as follows:

**QRIS Level 1**: 3,699 programs

**QRIS Level 2**: 1,519 programs

**QRIS Level 3**: 179 programs

**QRIS Level 4**: 15 programs

EEC has used Race to the Top - Early Learning Challenge grant funds to provide Program Quality Improvement grants to support programs with advancing in the QRIS. In 2015, EEC and its vendor, the United Way of Massachusetts Bay and Merrimack Valley, introduced multiple innovations through the QRIS Program Quality Improvement Grants including a Continuous Quality Improvement Plan (CQIP) that provides technical assistance providers in identifying resources needed to improve program quality based on self-assessment data. The CQIP is required for all programs applying for QRIS at Levels 2, 3, and 4. Educators use the CQIP to purchase durable goods to improve learning environments that impact program quality in the areas identified by the plan. To facilitate these purchases, programs access an online portal that was developed by a national vendor. This innovation enhances accountability and transparency, and eliminates the burden of paying up front for the purchases, which can be a significant barrier for providers. EEC also enhanced the engagement of grantees by developing an online QRIS community for educators to share resources and best practices and by hosting technical assistance sessions. These innovations have resulted in deepened program and educator engagement with the QRIS standards, and have enhanced the capacity to create and maintain high-quality environments.

EEC hired the University of Massachusetts Donahue Institute to conduct a study of the QRIS that validates whether the QRIS tiers accurately reflect differential levels of program quality, and assesses the extent to which quality ratings are related to children's progress in learning, development, and school readiness. A total of 128 programs participated in the QRIS Validation Study, the results of which will be used to revise the standards as needed over the next year.

*Preschool Science, Technology, and Engineering (STE) Learning Standards and Guidelines*

EEC developed Pre-Kindergarten Science, Technology, and Engineering (STE) Learning Standards to inform the development of STE curricula in early education programs for preschool children from 2 years and 9 months through 5 years old. The standards are developmentally appropriate for children in this age range and align to the Science and Technology/Engineering Standards for preschool through grade 2 being revised by the Department of Elementary and Secondary Education (ESE). The PreK STE Learning Standards also align with EEC’s licensing regulations, Massachusetts' early learning standards and guidelines, and the national Head Start Child Development and Early Learning Framework. In May 2015 the Board of Early Education and Care voted to hold a formal public comment on the draft Pre-K STE Standards. The Department of Early Education and Care conducted the public comment period from October 23, 2015 to November 20, 2015. The Department presented revised PreK STE Standards to the Board of Early Education and Care for discussion and vote, at their meeting on February 9, 2016. EEC will work with the Department of Elementary and Secondary Education (ESE) to offer professional development to educators in implementing the new PreK STE standards.

*Standards Development in the Domains of Social-Emotional Development and Approaches to Learning*

The Department of Early Education and Care partnered with the Department of Elementary and Secondary Education to develop *Standards for Preschool and Kindergarten in the Domains of Social and Emotional Learning, and Approaches to Play and Learning,* that support competency development in young children that is essential for success in school and in relationships throughout life. The Social and Emotional Learning Domains focus on Self-Knowledge, Self-Management, Social Knowledge, Relationship Skills, and Responsible Decision-Making. The Approaches to Play and Learning Domains focus on Initiative, Curiosity, Engagement/Persistence, Creativity, Cooperative Play and Learning, Problem Solving, Organizational Skills, and Memory. In April 2015, the Board of Early Education and Care adopted the *Standards for Preschool and Kindergarten in the Domains of Social and Emotional Learning, and Approaches to Play and Learning*. The Department had the Standards translated into multiple languages and is developing a series of trainings on the Standards that will be offered to early educators, administrators, and family engagement practitioners in 2016.

*Early English Language Learners (E-ELD) Guidelines to support Young Dual Language Learners*

In Massachusetts more than one in four children under age six live in households that speak a language other than English. In order to prepare children for school success, a focus on early learning for Dual Language Learners (DLLs) and meaningful engagement of their parents and communities is essential. In 2015, the Department developed and the Board of Early Education and Care adopted, Early English Language Development (E-ELD) Standards to support Dual Language Learners ages 2.5 to 5.5 years old. These standards cover early literacy, math, social studies, science, social emotional development and physical development, and are aligned with the state's early learning standards, the Head Start Child Development and Early Learning Framework, and the Department of Elementary and Secondary Education's K-12 English Language Development Standards. The E-ELD Standards help guide lesson planning to ensure that the different linguistic needs of dual language learners are being met in the classroom. EEC is working with its Educator and Provider Support Networks, the Regional Readiness Centers, and World Class Instructional Design and Assessment (WIDA) to offer professional development opportunities on the E-ELD Standards to early educators as well as higher education staff.

*Birth to Grade Three Strategy Development*

Massachusetts has embraced birth to third grade alignment as a comprehensive strategy that seeks to improve young children’s access to high quality birth to grade three programs and strengthens the capacity of elementary schools to sustain student learning gains in the early elementary school years. EEC has invested Race to the Top - Early Learning Challenge grant funds to help support communities with the goal of improving child outcomes through building alignment among systems serving infants, young children and their families. Eleven communities participated in this work: Lowell, Boston, Springfield, Somerville, Pittsfield, Cape Cod, Holyoke, Lawrence, New Bedford, North Adams/Northern Berkshires, and Worcester. The Birth to Grade Three Alignment Grants focused on strengthening the existing birth tothird grade infrastructure within targeted local communities (i.e., low-performing school districts, Gateway cities, and Home Visiting communities). Five of the Birth to Grade Three communities were chosen to participate in the Federal Preschool Expansion grant to provide additional high quality preschool to eligible four year olds and to strengthen their existing birth to grade 3 alignment efforts (Boston, Holyoke, Lawrence, Lowell, and Springfield).

The Birth to Grade Three grantees used the "Framework for Planning, Implementing, and Evaluating PreK-3rd Grade Approaches" created by Kristie Kauerz and Julia Hoffman to evaluate the alignment of early education systems in their community, in the following areas: Cross-Sector Work, Administrator Effectiveness, Teacher Effectiveness, Instructional Tools, Learning Environment, Data-Driven Improvement, Family Engagement, and Continuity and Pathways. While each grantee designed goals and projects to support the needs of their specific community, many of the communities chose to focus on common themes including: family engagement, improving alignment and transitions between/among early learning environments and public schools, improving 3rd grade literacy scores, professional development for educators and administrators, and school readiness. Developing strong partnerships and increasing collaboration among partners serving young children and their families is core to the work in all of the communities.

**Strategic Direction #3: The early childhood and out-of-school time workforce who works with children and families in the Commonwealth is professionally prepared, adequately compensated, and diverse.**

*Educator and Provider Support (EPS) Grantees*

The Department has established Educator and Provider Support (EPS) Networks across the state that provide a statewide comprehensive system of professional development for early education and out of school time educators in Massachusetts. The EPS networks provide degree/career pathway supports such as coaching, mentoring, planning, and access to evidence-based professional development that aligns with EEC licensing regulations, EEC core competencies for early educators, Massachusetts' early learning guidelines, and the state's Quality Rating and Improvement System (QRIS) Standards. There are five EPS networks supported through $3.3 million in EEC grant funds, as follows:

* Preschool Enrichment Team, Inc/ Valley Opportunity Council (Western MA: EEC Region 1)
* Family Services of Central MA (Central MA: EEC Region 2)
* North Shore Community College (Northeast MA: EEC Region 3)
* Child Development and Education, Inc (Southeast MA, Cape and Islands: EEC Region 5)
* Action for Boston Community Development, Inc (Metro Boston: EEC Region 6)

Professional development through the EPS Networks includes courses and trainings that address young children with disabilities, diverse learners, English language learners, children at risk of developmental delay, and children with high needs. The EPS networks also support EEC-licensed and license-exempt programs in attaining and maintaining national accreditation and upward movement in the QRIS. In 2015, the EPS networks provided a range of supports and resources to early educators and programs, including:

* Assistance to 2,926 early educators in creating an individualized professional development plan (IPDP) or updating an existing IPDP
* Support to 2,878 educators in meeting their professional development goals (e.g., 61 earned an associate's degree, 47 earned a bachelor's degree, and 29 earned a master's degree)
* Funding for 175 educators to enroll in an individual college course, and to enroll a total of 2,000 students as cohorts in 100 college courses
* Funding for nearly 5,000 educators to attend over 200 continuing education courses
* Coaching and mentoring, academic advising and career counseling to 4,879 educators
* Technical assistance to 1,806 programs through group and individual coaching and mentoring
* Assistance to over 600 programs in revising or completing a professional development plan or continuous quality improvement plan

*Early Childhood Educator Scholarships*

The state's Early Childhood Educator (ECE) Scholarship Program was established to increase early educators' access to higher education and to support them in attaining college degrees. The ECE Scholarship Program provides financial assistance to early education and care out-of-school time providers working in EEC-licensed or licensed-exempt programs who are pursuing associate's or bachelor's degrees in early childhood education or a related field at 46 colleges and universities in Massachusetts. The ECE Scholarship is jointly administered by the Department of Early Education and Care and the Department of Higher Education's Office of Student Financial Assistance (OSFA). In the 2015-2016 ECE Scholarship Program, 766 educators were approved for a scholarship that will fund the cost of up to six credits in the Fall 2015 term and up to six credits in the Spring 2016 term.

*Post Master's Certificate Program*

The Department of Early Education and Care, through its Race to the Top - Early Learning Challenge grant award, funded the University of Massachusetts Boston to design and deliver an innovative 12-credit post master’s certificate program that advances research, policy, leadership, and data-driven practice in early education and care. This Post Master’s Certificate in Early Education Research, Policy, and Leadership (PMC) was designed to improve the knowledge, skills, and abilities of early educators through a one-year program of four three-credit courses that align with EEC’s Core Competency Areas, QRIS Standards, and the National Association for the Education of Young Children's (NAEYC) Professional Preparation Standards. In the fall of 2015, the third cohort graduated and the fourth cohort began in the PMC program. The first non-EEC funded PMC cohort will be offered in September 2016. The PMC program articulates with graduate programs at Elms College, UMass Amherst, UMass Boston, and UMass Lowell. In 2016, further efforts will be made to secure articulation agreements with additional Massachusetts institutions of higher education. UMass Boston has developed a doctoral program in Early Childhood Education and Care that will begin in September 2016.

*Early Educators Fellowship Initiative (EEFI)*

The Early Educators Fellowship Initiative (EEFI), which started in 2010, is a community-based leadership institute that fosters collaboration and alignment in the mixed delivery system of early education and care serving children from birth to Grade Three. The EEFI brings together a cohort of leaders from public school districts and EEC-licensed programs (including Head Start and family child care) to develop and implement partnerships in their community that will improve children's school readiness and school success. In 2015 the EEFI was funded through the Race to the Top - Early Learning Challenge grant. More than 118 educators participated in the 2015 EEFI, which aligned with key EEC initiatives including the Birth to Third Grade NGA Policy Academy/Advisory Committee, and the Preschool Expansion Grant, and consisted of four day-long workshops featuring a combination of presentations, case studies, interactive discussion and small group work. The workshop topics included:

* Embracing the Birth through Grade Three Early Learning Continuum
* Building and Sustaining Birth through Grade three Systems
* Constructing a Comprehensive and Cohesive Birth Through Grade Three System
* Leading Communicating and Driving the Instructional Agenda

*Readiness Centers*

Through the Race to the Top - Early Learning Challenge grant, EEC contracted with the Massachusetts Regional Readiness Centers to provide workforce development support to early educators and programs. These supports include academic advising and career counseling, training on using student data to individualize teaching, and training on early learning standards and guidelines. The Readiness Centers also support school districts in implementing the Massachusetts Kindergarten Entry Assessment (MKEA). With leadership from the Pioneer Valley Readiness Center, the Readiness Centers created a website, [EarlyEducatorPathways.org](http://www.earlyeducatorpathways.org/), for helping educators find a degree program in early childhood education that is most suitable for them.

*EarlyEdCon*

This year the Department partnered with Educator and Provider Support grantee for Region 3 at North Shore Community College, the Northeast Regional Readiness Center at Salem State University, and Burlington Public Schools, to offer EarlyEdCon, a professional development conference for early educators. EarlyEdCon was held on Saturday, October 17, 2015 and was open to early education and out of school time providers across the Commonwealth. The conference focused on ideas and best practices for creating an outstanding early childhood learning program. Commissioner Weber provided the keynote address to more than 300 educators. EEC solicited feedback from conference participants, the majority whom responded reported that the session presentations provided in-depth information that will inform future practice and will ultimately benefit the children and families they serve.

*Peer Assistance and Coaching*

The Peer Assistance and Coaching (PAC) project utilizes the knowledge and experience of early childhood educators and directors to support one another’s practices through coaching and feedback. In the PAC model educators review video recording of classroom practices to learn about effective strategies and receive feedback that can improve educators' competencies. The PAC projects promotes educators' knowledge of EEC's workforce core competencies, supports improved educator practice, and helps to increase workforce retention through peer support. Over a two year period, 38 pairs of coaches and mentees participated in the PAC project. The coaches received specialized training from the regional Educator and Provider Support network via monthly professional learning communities. The coaches received extensive training using the Classroom Assessment Scoring System (CLASS) tool as their framework as well as relationship-based training. A pre-post evaluation of the model using the CLASS tool showed improvement in mentees' classroom practice across the three domains of Instructional Support, Emotional Support, and Classroom Organization.

*Business Planning Expertise for Early Education*

In 2015, the Department continued its support to early educators to increase their business planning skills, recognizing that programs that are able to implement sound business practices are better positioned to retain talented staff that can provide high- quality early education for young children. The Department developed a business planning course that helps programs perform effectively on the Program Administration Scale (PAS) and Business Administration Scale (BAS) so that they can meet higher level criteria on the QRIS to demonstrate improved program quality. EEC is working with the Educator and Provider Support networks, Readiness Centers, and Family Child Care systems to offer the business planning course to early educators in both center-based and family child care across the state to support their program operation and business planning practices.

*Technical Assistance Guide for Early Educators*

In 2013-2014 EEC developed "*Guiding Change, Impacting Quality: A Guide to Technical Assistance in Setting Serving Infants & Toddlers, Preschoolers, and Children in Out-of-School Time Programs and Their Families".* This guide to effective consultation for consultants, mentors and faculty serving settings for three to five year olds and out-of-school time providers was developed to ensure quality services are provided to these age groups and consistent foundational practices are occurring in the early childhood field. The purpose of the Guide is to describe and articulate the dispositions, knowledge, and skills needed by Technical Assistance providers who work in one or more of the following settings: Infant/Toddler, Pre-Kindergarten, and Out of School Time programs. The Technical Assistance Guide includes a self-assessment that helps to ensure individuals have an understanding of the tools and have the core competencies to provide quality coaching and mentoring services and to work effectively with educators and early childhood programs. The Department's Educator and Provider Support Networks use the Technical Assistance Guide Self-Assessment Tool with their coaching staff. EEC is working with a vendor to offer professional development on the TA guide and Self-Assessment tool. The TA Guide and Self-Assessment tool were also utilized in the Peer Assistance and Coaching project.

*Higher Education for English Language Learners* -

In 2014-2015 EEC utilized funding from the Race to the Top - Early Learning Challenge grant to contract with the CAYL Institute to develop guidance on ensuring that early educators who are English Language Learners (ELL) receive content knowledge needed to work effectively with children and families by helping them prepare for college level courses in English and matriculation into a degree-granting program. Through this project CAYL organized a Higher Education Faculty Institute with deans and administrators on the topic of higher education for ELLs in the early education field, developed a Career Lattice for ELL students entering into college, and held focus groups to identify ways to support ELL students on a career pathway. CAYL provided EEC with a summary report of their findings recommendations for supporting ELL students in attaining professional credentials and college degrees.

*InterAgency Professional Development Partnerships*

In 2015, EEC continued to advance the state agency partnerships established through the Race to the Top - Early Learning Challenge grant in order to strengthen the knowledge and capacity of providers who work with young children and their families. EEC's state agency partners include the Department of Housing and Community Development, the Department of Public Health, the Department of Mental Health, and the Office of Immigrants and Refugees. The accomplishments through these partnerships included:

* The Department of Housing and Community Development (DHCD) disseminated information to over 60 shelters on training opportunities covering topics such as trauma, substance abuse, mental illness, nutrition and impact of domestic violence on young children, and more than 50 shelter staff across the state participated in these trainings.
* The Department of Public Health (DPH) trained EEC's Educator and Provider Support networks on a four part *Strength-Based training series*that coveredtrauma in early childhood, family substance use, parent mental health, and exposure to violence.
* DPH, DHCD and Horizons for Homeless Children worked together to train nearly 80 homeless shelter direct care providers on providing social and emotional supports to children and their families. DPH linked the shelter teams with and an early childhood mental health clinician with knowledge of the training model and trauma-informed practice, to provide mentoring and technical assistance.
* EEC and the Department of Mental Health (DMH) collaborated with the Children's Behavioral Health Initiative (CBHI) to develop an Infant and Early Childhood Mental Health Resources and Services guide. Close to 2,000 copies were distributed to early childhood professionals across the state. The guide is available on line in English and Spanish. Twenty-eight In Home Therapy Clinical supervisors at eight CBHI sites participated in a Learning Collaborative model to expand their capacity and confidence to provide treatment and intervention with young children and their families with histories of trauma and serious emotional and behavioral challenges.
* The Office of Refugees and Immigrants (ORI) continued to offer the *“New Start: Supporting Multilingual Young Children and Immigrant and Refugee Families”* trainingto the Coordinated Family and Community Engagement networks, Child Care Resources and Referral Agencies (CCR&Rs), Family Child Care System Providers, Head Start programs, and ORI’s service providers. The trainings address cultural competency, and child development and educational principles in the context of multilingual homes and multicultural environments. ORI is working with Tufts University to create a web-based version of the *New Start* training.

**Strategic Direction #4: The Department and Board of Early Education and Care will provide leadership, direction and resources to meet the mission of the agency with utmost integrity, transparency and accountability to the people of the Commonwealth**

*FY16 Budget*

The FY16 General Appropriation Act (GAA) provided $550.8M for EEC's budget, which is $13.5M more than EEC's FY15 total available funding level. EEC's FY16 budget provides maintenance or level funding for most accounts, but also includes considerable investments in quality child care access, and an unprecedented structural change in the caseload accounts. Below is a brief summary of EEC's FY16 budget accounts:

**3000-1000 / Administration**: The FY16 appropriation of $13,719,920 is $355,811 (2.66%) higher than the FY15 post 9C level. The increase FY16 is associated with annualizing FY15 collective bargaining agreement (CBA) increases; FY16 step increases and cost of living adjustments per the CBA; and the lease increases for EEC's Boston, Worcester, and Springfield offices.

**3000-2000 / Access Management**: The FY16 appropriation of $6,675,311 provides $300K more than the amount available in FY15. The increase will provide the Child Care Resource and Referral Agencies (CCRRs) with additional financial support to process approximately 2,000 new child care vouchers in FY16.

**3000-3060 / Supportive-DTA**: The FY16 GAA merges the Supportive and DTA caseload accounts into a new line item funded at $219,907,383. This amount is sufficient to support our current FY16 forecast for both Supportive and DTA-Related care. This account may receive, if necessary, funds from the Income Eligible account to resolve and potential FY16 deficiencies; however, may not be transferred from this account to the Income Eligible account. The language in this line item mandates Supportive Child Care and Transitional/DTA Child Care for all eligible children. DCF's FY16 Clinical Support Services and Operations account (4800-0015) also states that "all children eligible for services under item 3000-3060 shall receive such services".

**3000-4040 / Waitlist Remediation**: The FY16 budget includes $12,000,000 to serve new children off of the Income Eligible waitlist.

**3000-4060 / Income Eligible**: The FY16 budget includes $252,944,993 for Income Eligible, equal to the funding level provided in House 1 and the House and Senate budgets. This funding level is also sufficient to meet our current FY16 forecast.

**Prior Appropriation Continued (PAC):** Chapter 119 of the Acts of 2015 transferred $5M of unspent funds from the FY15 Income Eligible appropriation to the FY16 Income Eligible account. These funds will be used to help support necessary Information Technology system upgrades.

**3000-5000 / Head Start**: The FY16 budget of $9,100,000 which is $1M greater than the FY15 funding level. FY16 Head Start contracts have already been released; EEC will increase each grantee's contract in the near future to account for the newly awarded funds.

**3000-7050 Services for Infants and Parents**: The funding includes $4M to target program quality program improvements.

**3000-7070 Reach Out and Read**: This account is funded at $1M, an increase of $300K when compared to the FY15 level of $700K.

**1599-0042 / Salary Reserve**: This line items provides $5M to increase the rate that EEC pays to center-based child care providers by an estimated average of 1.394%.

**LEVEL FUNDED ACCOUNTS**

The FY16 Budget provides the same amount of funds as available in FY15 for the following accounts:

* **3000-5075 / UPK**: $7,400,000
* **3000-6075 / Mental Health**: $750,000
* **3000-7040 / Contingency Contract Retained Revenue**: $200,000

**NEW ITEMS**

**3000-6025 / Commonwealth Preschool Partnership Initiative**: This is new grant program, funded at $500,000, to assist the planning activities of certain entities currently providing pre-K or pre-school service to expand opportunities to children ages 2.9 to 3.11 years-old.

*Grants Administration*

EEC implemented a new Online Application for several FY16 grant programs, including: the Head Start State Supplemental Grant, the Coordinated Family and Community Engagement grant, the Inclusive Preschool grant, the Mental Health Consultation Services grant, the Educator and Provider Support grant, the Universal Pre-Kindergarten grant, and the Early Childhood Special Education grant. EEC also used COMMBUYS, the new state procurement system, for the posting of all FY16 competitive grants. EEC's Grants Administration staff continues to work with the Information Technology and Policy units to add budget amendments and final financial reports to the existing online system for all grants.

*Internal Control Plan - Review and Update*

The annual review of EEC's Internal Control Plan took place in Summer 2015 and included the following activities:

* A ongoing review of the suggested edits and comments submitted by the Comptroller’s Quality Assurance Bureau from the 2013 Internal Control Plan;
* Dissemination of the EEC Fraud, Waste, and Abuse process and statement to all EEC staff for review and signature; and
* Development of Policies and Procedures and review for potential risk.

*Single State Audit*

KPMG conducted a Single State Audit on the Child Care Development Fund (CCDF) granted to EEC utilizing the OMB A-133 CCDF Audit Supplement for the review of State Fiscal Year 2015. This audit began in May 2015 and concluded in September 2015. The areas of review consisted of Allowable Costs/Cost Principles, Eligibility, Matching, Period of Availability of Federal Funds, Reporting, Sub recipient Monitoring, Cash Management, Health and Safety, and Fraud Detection and Repayment. Sample requests consisted of selected documentation and EEC's internal controls related to each review area. This Audit resulted in no findings. EEC awaits a draft audit report from KPMG.

*Audit Compliance and Resolution Unit (ACR) – Revisions to Policy and Procedures*

In April and May 2015, EEC held trainings on the regulations and policies governing transport of children in EEC-contracted and EEC-licensed programs. These trainings included presentations from EEC's Licensing, Legal, Background Record Check, and Audit units. Over 200 attendees from EEC's subsidized child care providers, Child Care Resource and Referral Agencies, and private transportation companies completed the training. EEC will hold another round of transportation trainings in April and May 2016.

*Child Care Financial Assistance System (CCFA)*

The Department of Early Education and Care (EEC) provides financial assistance for low-income and other families in need who meet eligibility requirements so that their child/children may attend a high quality early education and care program. Two separate systems were established over a decade ago for programs to request reimbursement from EEC: CCIMS for voucher subsidies, and eCCIMS for contract subsidies.

EEC has developed a new single platform for managing subsidy awards, the Child Care Financial Assistance system (CCFA). In comparison to the legacy billing applications, CCFA is more complex and implements a strict adherence to policy. CCFA will support the agency's responsibility for providing subsidies to eligible families through early education and care and out of school time programs. EEC's annual budget of approximately $500 million for subsidy management will be solely managed by CCFA.

CCFA was moved to production and rolled out to the Child Care Resource and Referral agencies and Contract Providers during the last week of June in preparation for a July 1, 2015 start date. After the roll out it became apparent there were some systemic problems that prevented the use of the system and policy interpretations incorporated into CCFA business rules that required revisions. The field also highlighted business practices that resulted in some additional changes to CCFA.

In early August, system performance issues arose as providers began submitting monthly attendance for billing purposes. EEC immediately implemented an Alternative Payment Method (APM) to ensure providers could be paid for their services on an estimated basis outside of the CCFA system. The billing module will be launched in early Spring 2016, with reconciliation of estimated payments to occur at that time. EEC is working closely with providers to support their use of the new system.

*Sustaining the Success of the Race to the Top - Early Learning Challenge Grant*

In 2012, Massachusetts received a $50 million four-year federal Race to the Top - Early Learning Challenge (RTTT-ELC) grant award The RTTT-ELC grants supported states in enhancing the quality of their early education and care system.The goal of the RTTT-ELC grant program is to help ensure that children are prepared for kindergarten and enter the K-12 system with a strong foundation for success. The RTTT-ELC grant focuses on five key areas:

1. Successful State Systems
2. High-Quality, Accountable Programs (Quality Rating and Improvement Systems or QRIS)
3. Promoting Early Learning and Development Outcomes for Children
4. A Great Early Childhood Education Workforce
5. Measuring Outcomes and Progress

In 2015, Massachusetts completed the fourth year of the grant. The majority of the projects were completed by December 31, 2015, with a few projects carrying over into 2016 through a no-cost extension period. In total, Massachusetts successfully implemented twelve projects with approximately $24.1M devoted to statewide infrastructure investment programs and $25.8M directed toward direct community investment programs. These projects were carried out in partnership with local institutions of higher education, media outlets, private and public organizations, and our fellow state agencies with the shared goal of expanding and enhancing quality early education and care resources for the Commonwealth's youngest children and their families. The grant has helped to bring together this wide variety of sectors around a common goal of investing in our future. EEC and its partners have been implementing strategies to sustain the key activities supported by RTTT-ELC past the end of the grant period. Below is a brief summary of the sustainability plan for key RTTT-ELC projects. See Appendix F for the full RTTT-ELC Sustainability Plan.

1. **Successful State Systems:**

RTTT-ELC provided EEC the resources to create a Program Quality Unit to support the enhanced implementation of the MA QRIS. Before RTTT-ELC, programs' QRIS ratings were based on self-assessment. EEC did not have the staffing capacity for site visits to programs to verify quality and all document review was done by one staff person. In the last year, Program Quality Specialists granted QRIS Level 3 or Level 4 ratings to a total of 140 programs, serving 6,289 children. In the FY16 budget, Massachusetts allocated state funds for program quality activities, including the maintenance of the Program Quality Unit through the end of the fiscal year. In 2015, EEC moved the Program Quality Unit under the Deputy Commissioner of Field and Legal Operations, which will further integrate QRIS into the all areas of the agency's work.

Through RTTT-ELC the Department of Public Health developed key health-related policies and resources for programs including resources directly linked to the QRIS. State quality funding that is sustaining EEC's Program Quality Unit will also support the continuation of Regional Health Advisors positions that were created through RTTT-ELC. The Department of Mental Health (DMH) worked with its partners including the Child Behavioral Health Initiative and Massachusetts Child Psychiatric Access Project to imbed early childhood development and mental health into clinical setting across the Commonwealth. DMH has also secured funding for their Early Childhood Mental Health position through the end of FY16 and is currently working with EEC create a Early Childhood Mental Health Specialist position at DMH that will be housed at EEC. This position will continue to work on activities implemented under RTTT-ELC and would serve to coordinate and align the several mental and behavioral health initiatives of EEC.

1. **High Quality Accountable Programs: Massachusetts' Quality Rating and Improvement System**

EEC developed several sustainable resources through the RTTT-ELC grant that will provide ongoing support for program quality improvement, including an online learning community, and a Business Planning course that helps programs to meet QRIS standards. EEC's FY16 budget included a $4 million earmark for program quality initiatives, which will support additional professional development, program quality improvement grants, and research on outcomes from the QRIS.

1. **Promoting Early Learning and Development Outcomes for Children**

EEC developed Preschool and Kindergarten Standards in the domains of Social Emotional Development and Approaches to Play and Learning and next year will implement a train the trainer model to support educators in using these standards. Through the efforts of our Head Start State Collaboration Office, Massachusetts has imbedded the Early English Language Development Standards (E-ELDS) into the QRIS program standards and training on the standards is supported through our EPS grantees. Additional trainings on the E-ELDS will be held next year.

Through the RTTT-ELC grant, EEC established several new partnerships and expanded an existing partnership to supporting families in informal education and care programs. EEC's projects with Boston Children's Museum, United Way, and WGBH provided training and resources to intermediaries such as the CFCE networks, children's museums, and libraries that work with families, on supporting children's learning in informal settings. All three partners have committed to continuing supporting these efforts next year. EEC also used RTTT-ELC funds to support the CFCE networks in using Ages and Stages for providing developmental screenings and referrals. EEC will support continued training and use of the Ages and Stages screener in FY16 through state budget funds.

1. **Workforce**

Through RTTT-ELC, EEC partnered with the University of Massachusetts, Boston to develop a Post Master’s Certificate in Early Education Research, Policy, and Leadership (PMC), which UMass Boston will continue to offer as part of their tuition-based programs. The University has also developed a doctoral program in early childhood education that accepts the PMC Program and has established articulation agreements with three other institutes of higher education across the state. EEC partnered with the Institute for Education and Professional Development (IEPD) to design a model for Peer Assistance and Coaching (PAC). The PAC online platform will continue to be available through the end of next year, and EEC is assessing whether the training and peer learning components of the PAC model can be continued through existing state funds, including the additional quality funds in the SFY16 budget.

1. **Measuring Outcomes and Progress**

EEC used RTTT-ELC grant funds to build the Early Childhood Information System (ECIS), a data warehouse and reporting platform that can produce reports on child, program and educator data pulled from the agency's many web-base applications, as well as to begin development of a new Licensing and Education Analytical Database (LEAD), which will serve as the platform for integrating licensing and QRIS data. These applications will greatly increase the efficiency of licensing and program quality support staff and will provide EEC and the state will much higher quality data on programs, children and providers. In effort to measure child developmental outcomes at kindergarten entry, Massachusetts used RTTT-ELC funds to implement the Massachusetts Kindergarten Entry Assessment (MKEA). EEC is working with a consultant to develop recommendations on future implementation of MKEA based on best practices of other states and key informant interviews regional partners who provide regional support for MKEA and school districts.

APPENDICES

## Appendix A: Legislative Reporting Requirements

Annual Legislative Report Language:

**M.G.L. c. 15D, Sec. 3:**

(g) The board shall submit an annual report to the secretary of education, the secretary of administration and finance, and the clerks of the House of Representatives and senate, who shall forward the same to the joint committee on education, describing its progress in achieving the goals and implementing the programs authorized in this chapter. The report shall evaluate the progress made toward universal early education and care for preschool-aged children and toward reducing expulsion rates through developmentally appropriate prevention and intervention services.

The department shall include an annual report on behavioral health indicators that includes estimates of the annual rates of preschool suspensions and expulsions, the types and prevalence of behavioral health needs of children served by the department, the racial and ethnic background of the children with identified behavioral health needs, the existing capacity to provide behavioral health services, and an analysis of the best intervention and prevention practices, including strategies to improve the delivery of comprehensive services and to improve collaboration between and among early education and care and human services providers. The report and any recommendations for legislative or regulatory changes shall be submitted by February 15th to the secretary of health and human services, the secretary of administration and finance, the children's behavioral health advisory council, the child advocate, and the general court by filing it with the house committee on ways and means, the senate committee on ways and means, the joint committee on education, the joint committee on mental health and substance abuse, the joint committee on children, families and persons with disabilities, the clerk of the house and the clerk of the senate.

**M.G.L. c. 15D, Sec. 5:**

The board shall develop and annually update an implementation plan for a workforce development system designed to support the education, training and compensation of the early education and care workforce, including all center, FCC, infant, toddler, preschool and school-age providers. The board shall solicit input from organizations and agencies that represent a diverse spectrum of expertise, knowledge and understanding of broader workforce development issues and of the professional development needs of the early childhood and care workforce. In order to inform the plan, the board shall conduct:

(1) an inventory and assessment of the current resources and strategies available for workforce and professional development in the commonwealth, including but not limited to Head Start trainings, community-based trainings, higher education programs, child care resource and referral agency trainings, state and federally funded workforce development trainings/programs, public school system trainings/credentialing, and other trainings that address the needs of those who work with children and make recommendations for coordinating the use of those existing resources and strategies;

(2) analyses using current data on the status of the early education and care workforce, including work experience, certifications, education, training opportunities, salaries, benefits and workplace standards; and

(3) an assessment of the workforce capacity necessary to meet the state's early education and care needs in the future.

In the development of the plan, the board shall consider:

(1) core competencies, a common and shared body of knowledge, for all those working in the early education and care fields;

(2) streamlined and coordinated state certification, credentialing, and licensing within the early education and care fields including teacher and provider certification and licensing, the child development associate, public school teacher certification, and other program standards as appropriate for director, teacher and provider credentialing requirements;

(3) a mandatory and regularly updated professional development and qualification registry;

(4) agreements among IHEs for an articulated system of education, training, and professional development in early education and care;

(5) approval of early education and care training programs and academic coursework, incentives for associates and bachelors programs to meet best practices and to modify curricula to reflect current child development research, and certification of trainers and teachers;

(6) coordination of existing workforce resources among public agencies, including establishing regional workforce support resources in coordination with child care resource and referral agencies;

(7) a range of professional development and educational opportunities that provide appropriate coursework and degree pathways for FCC as well as center-based providers at all levels of the career ladder that are available in locations, days, and times that are accessible;

(8) credit for prior learning experiences, development of equivalencies to 2 and 4 year degrees, and the inclusion of strategies for multiple pathways for entry into the field of early education and care;

(9) recruitment and retention of individuals into the early education and care workforce who reflect the ethnic, racial, linguistic, and cultural diversity of Massachusetts families based on the current census data;

(10) incentives and supports for early education and care professionals to seek additional training and education, such as scholarships, stipends, loan forgiveness connected to a term of service in the field, career counseling and mentoring, release time and substitutes;

(11) guidelines for a career ladder or career lattice representing salaries and benefits that suitably compensate professionals for increases in educational attainment and with incentives for advancement, including a salary enhancement program;

(12) public and private resources to support the workforce development system;

(13) a data collection and evaluation system to determine whether the workforce and professional development activities established pursuant to this chapter are achieving recruitment, retention and quality of the workforce goals;

(14) ways to recognize and honor advancement in educational attainment among early educational and care professionals;

(15) professional development opportunities that are provided in languages other than English, and incorporation of these opportunities into any broader, articulated system that is developed; and

(16) alignment of the core competencies, course offerings and other professional development opportunities, where appropriate, with the program quality standards established under section 11.

(17) training to identify and address infant toddler and early childhood behavioral health needs.

**M.G.L. c. 15D, Sec. 10:**

The board shall include in its annual report rules and regulations promulgated by the board relative to the use of civil fines and sanctions, the types of sanctions, and the amount of those fines.

**M.G.L. c. 15D, Sec. 13(d):**

The department of early education and care, with the approval of the board and in consultation with the state advisory committee on early education and care established in [section 3A](https://web2.westlaw.com/find/default.wl?tf=-1&rs=WLW9.10&fn=_top&sv=Split&docname=MAST15DS3A&tc=-1&pbc=3101D9A2&ordoc=19889350&findtype=L&db=1000042&vr=2.0&rp=%2ffind%2fdefault.wl&mt=56), shall study and present any additional recommendations on the programmatic, financing, and phase-in options for the development and universal implementation of the Massachusetts universal pre-kindergarten program. This study shall include an estimate of the need for full-day, full-year care that meets the needs of parents who work full-time and shall include the number of pre-school aged children in the commonwealth who may be at risk due to family poverty, TAFDC status, special needs, or other risk factors.

The department shall include its findings and recommendations, and any updates of its findings, in the annual report required under section 3.

Link to last year’s report: <http://www.mass.gov/edu/docs/eec/legislative-reports/fy15-annual-legislative-report-cover-letter.docx>

## Appendix B: Licensing Data

|  |  |  |  |  |  |  |
| --- | --- | --- | --- | --- | --- | --- |
| **New Licensing Enforcement Actions** | # in 2010 | # in 2011 | # in 2012 | # in 2013 | # in 2014 | # in 2015 |
| Sanctions | 6 | 10 | 5 | 17 | 22 | 19 |
| Acknowledgment of Vol. Surrender | 3 | 1 | 13 | 31 | 17 | 27 |
| Revocation (license and TQ) | 5 | 9 | 17 | 6 | 17 | 15 |
| Cease and Desist | 8 | 12 | 9 | 24 | 28 | 12 |
| C&D w/ Civ. Injunc. | 1 | 2 | 0 | 1 | 0 | 0 |
| C&D w/ Crim. Pen. | 0 | 0 | 0 | 0 | 0 | 0 |
| Refusal to Renew/Issue | 1 | 5 | 3 | 4 | 6 | 6 |
| Emergency Suspension | 3 | 7 | 8 | 4 | 10 | 19 |
| Legal Agreement | 2 | 3 | 4 | 1 | 8 | 16 |
| Legal Consult | 2 | 1 | 2 | 4 | 2 | 11 |
| Appeal of CORI/DCF denial | 1 | 2 | 0 | 4 | 11 | 16 |
| Enforcement Mtg. | 0 | 1 | 3 | 0 | 1 | 1 |
| Fine | 0 | 1 | 1 | 1 | 0 | 0 |
| Correction Order | 0 | 2 | 0 | 0 | 0 | 0 |
| **TOTAL:** | **32** | **56** | **65** | **97** | **107** | **142** |

*NOTE: Many licensing legal referrals require multiple actions (i.e. emergency suspension/revocation, sanctions and fine, etc.)*

|  |  |  |  |  |  |  |
| --- | --- | --- | --- | --- | --- | --- |
| **Subsidy Appeals** | **2010 Total** | **2011 Total** | **2012 Total** | **2013 Total** | **2014 Total** | **2015 Total** |
| Requests for Review | 847 | 1,226 | 928 | 974 | 1,073 | 1,065 |
| Reviews Completed | 840 | 900 | 864 | 888 | 846 | 500 |
| Requests for Hearing | 37 | 60 | 41 | 94 | 83 | 63 |
| 30A Appeals | 1 | 0 | 0 | 0 | 1 | 3 |

## Appendix B: Licensing Data (CONTINUED)

|  |  |  |  |  |  |  |  |  |  |  |  |  |
| --- | --- | --- | --- | --- | --- | --- | --- | --- | --- | --- | --- | --- |
| **LICENSED PROGRAMS** | **Jan(2015)** | **Feb(2015)** | **Mar(2015)** | **Apr(2015)** | **May(2015)** | **June(2015)** | **July(2015)** | **August(2015)** | **Sept(2015)** | **Oct(2015)** | **Nov(2015)** | **Dec(2015)** |
| Central MA | 1,994 | 1,984 | 1,973 | 1,967 | 1,958 | 1,937 | 1,930 | 1,861 | 1,846 | 1,842 | 1,832 | 1,827 |
| Metro Boston | 2,177 | 2,166 | 2,166 | 2,170 | 2,164 | 2,152 | 2,147 | 2,142 | 2,141 | 2,130 | 2,136 | 2,122 |
| Northeast | 2,198 | 2,182 | 2,177 | 2,166 | 2,160 | 2,140 | 2,122 | 2,192 | 2,192 | 2,194 | 2,199 | 2,192 |
| Southeast & Cape | 1,866 | 1,859 | 1,847 | 1,849 | 1,850 | 1,828 | 1,815 | 1,808 | 1,805 | 1,805 | 1,794 | 1,789 |
| Western | 1,682 | 1,674 | 1,663 | 1,653 | 1,643 | 1,628 | 1,627 | 1,627 | 1,629 | 1,626 | 1,628 | 1,625 |
| **Total # Programs** | 9,917 | 9,865 | 9,826 | 9,805 | 9,775 | 9,685 | 9,641 | 9,630 | 9,613 | 9,597 | 9,589 | 9,555 |
|  |  |  |  |  |  |  |  |  |  |  |  |  |
| **LICENSED CAPACITY** | **Jan(2015)** | **Feb(2015)** | **Mar(2015)** | **Apr(2015)** | **May(2015)** | **June(2015)** | **July(2015)** | **August(2015)** | **Sept(2015)** | **Oct(2015)** | **Nov(2015)** | **Dec(2015)** |
| Family Child Care | 50,267 | 49,863 | 49,607 | 49,500 | 49,298 | 48,858 | 48,619 | 48,436 | 48,227 | 48,066 | 48,018 | 47,848 |
| Small Group/School Age | 299 | 319 | 319 | 329 | 293 | 247 | 177 | 203 | 245 | 257 | 257 | 257 |
| Large Group/School Age | 173,556 | 173,892 | 173,960 | 174,031 | 174,150 | 173,948 | 173,789 | 174,637 | 175,175 | 175,639 | 175,830 | 175,554 |
| Residential & Placement | 6,787 | 6,822 | 6,811 | 6,816 | 6,820 | 6,797 | 6,801 | 6,787 | 6,783 | 6,774 | 6,770 | 6,773 |
| **Total Licensed Capacity** | 230,909 | 230,896 | 230,697 | 230,676 | 230,561 | 229,850 | 229,386 | 230,063 | 230,430 | 230,736 | 230,875 | 230,432 |
|  |  |  |  |  |  |  |  |  |  |  |  |  |
| **LICENSE ACTIVITY** | **Jan(2015)** | **Feb(2015)** | **Mar(2015)** | **Apr(2015)** | **May(2015)** | **June(2015)** | **July(2015)** | **Aug (2015)** | **Sept(2015)** | **Oct(2015)** | **Nov(2015)** | **Dec (2015)** |
| New | 37 | 31 | 30 | 37 | 27 | 41 | 38 | 64 | 54 | 56 | 52 | 30 |
| Renewal | 220 | 196 | 284 | 288 | 276 | 315 | 314 | 211 | 225 | 259 | 251 | 269 |
| Reopen | 5 | 4 | 4 | 7 | 4 | 12 | 4 | 2 | 5 | 4 | 3 | 7 |
| Moves | 15 | 17 | 20 | 24 | 19 | 28 | 32 | 36 | 26 | 30 | 22 | 18 |
| **Closed Programs** | **72** | **87** | **75** | **75** | **66** | **153** | **93** | **92** | **90** | **104** | **75** | **81** |
| **New Applications Received** | **53** | **49** | **53** | **58** | **65** | **83** | **85** | **102** | **78** | **50** | **64** | **56** |
| **Total Licenses Issued** | **277** | **248** | **338** | **356** | **326** | **396** | **388** | **313** | **310** | **349** | **328** | **324** |
|  |  |  |  |  |  |  |  |  |  |  |  |  |
| **COMPLAINTS** | **Jan(2015)** | **Feb(2015)** | **Mar(2015)** | **Apr(2015)** | **May(2015)** | **June(2015)** | **July(2015)** | **Aug (2015)** | **Sept(2015)** | **Oct(2015)** | **Nov(2015)** | **Dec (2015)** |
| # of closed complaints during the month | 176 | 172 | 248 | 232 | 172 | 329 | 233 | 178 | 172 | 171 | 209 | 235 |
| # of new complaints received during month | 182 | 148 | 250 | 286 | 241 | 244 | 228 | 208 | 209 | 203 | 218 | 194 |
| # of open complaints on 1st day of month | 410 | 412 | 385 | 382 | 431 | 489 | 398 | 390 | 405 | 430 | 455 | 458 |
| # of open complaints on 1st day of the month with interim report completed | 33 | 39 | 31 | 20 | 36 | 31 | 38 | 33 | 31 | 27 | 31 | 31 |
|  |  |  |  |  |  |  |  |  |  |  |  |  |
| **VISITS** | **Jan(2015)** | **Feb(2015)** | **Mar(2015)** | **Apr(2015)** | **May(2015)** | **June(2015)** | **July(2015)** | **Aug (2015)** | **Sept(2015)** | **Oct(2015)** | **Nov(2015)** | **Dec (2015)** |
| Central MA | 49 | 51 | 57 | 47 | 33 | 84 | 64 | 84 | 90 | 63 | 60 | 35 |
| Metro Boston | 39 | 37 | 84 | 67 | 50 | 68 | 88 | 54 | 71 | 72 | 47 | 65 |
| Northeast | 76 | 66 | 117 | 116 | 68 | 107 | 72 | 68 | 65 | 91 | 56 | 89 |
| Southeast & Cape | 55 | 69 | 73 | 118 | 72 | 72 | 95 | 95 | 76 | 82 | 68 | 59 |
| Western | 42 | 43 | 60 | 57 | 29 | 56 | 40 | 56 | 51 | 51 | 42 | 41 |
| **Total # of Visits** | 261 | 266 | 391 | 405 | 252 | 387 | 359 | 357 | 353 | 359 | 273 | 293 |

***Note(s):***  Licensing information includes data for open and currently active FCC, GCC, SACC and R&P programs; delegated and exempt programs, but excludes FCC Assistants. Number of programs and total capacity are calculated on the first day of the following month. If GCC has Limited SACC, they are counted as one program and their capacity is combined.. Complaint information includes data for all types of intakes: Complaint, Voluntary Incident, Mandatory Incidents, Injury/Illness Review and Internal Investigation. ***Data Source(s)***: ECIS Monthly reporting database with sources out of Licensing.

## Appendix C: 2015 Caseload Detail

2015 Caseload by Age

|  |  |  |
| --- | --- | --- |
|  | **Final Caseload as Billed by Providers** | **CCFA Placements** |
| **Age Group** | **Jan-15** | **Feb-15** | **Mar-15** | **Apr-15** | **May-15** | **Jun-15** | **Jul-15** | **Aug-15** | **Sep-15** | **Oct-15** | **Nov-15** | **Dec-15** |
| Infant | 3,243  | 3,103  | 3,159  | 3,120  | 3,103  | 3,070  | 2,909  | 2,955  | 3,304  | 3,292  | 3,234  | 3,128  |
| Toddler | 9,778  | 9,589  | 9,632  | 9,567  | 9,342  | 9,143  | 8,829  | 8,710  | 8,955  | 9,017  | 9,077  | 8,922  |
| Preschool | 18,599 | 18,389 | 18,611 | 18,587 | 18,570 | 18,462 | 18,185 | 18,188 | 18,889 | 18,641 | 18,510 | 18,306 |
| School Age | 24,913  | 25,264  | 25,573  | 26,423  | 26,346  | 27,839  | 27,225  | 27,158  | 25,559  | 23,703  | 24,003  | 24,356  |
| **Total** | **56,533** | **56,345** | **56,975** | **57,697** | **57,361** | **58,514** | **57,148** | **57,011** | **56,707** | **54,653** | **54,824** | **54,712** |
|  |  |  |  |  |  |  |  |  |  |  |  |  |
| \* January through June data based on billed actuals |  |  |  |  |  |  |  |
| \*\* July through December data based on CCFA placement information as of 12/14/15 |  |  |  |

2015 Caseload by Account

|  |  |  |
| --- | --- | --- |
|  | **Final Caseload as Billed by Providers** | **CCFA Placements** |
| **Child Care Account** | **Jan-15** | **Feb-15** | **Mar-15** | **Apr-15** | **May-15** | **Jun-15** | **Jul-15** | **Aug-15** | **Sep-15** | **Oct-15** | **Nov-15** | **Dec-15** |
| Supportive | 7,039  | 7,022  | 7,278  | 7,303  | 7,355  | 7,473  | 7,475  | 7,369  | 7,362  | 6,850  | 6,898  | 6,880  |
| DTA-Related Care | 14,105  | 13,914  | 14,081  | 14,393  | 14,356  | 14,457  | 14,239  | 14,181  | 14,312  | 14,076  | 13,999  | 13,804  |
| Income Eligible | 32,965 | 32,981 | 33,181 | 33,590 | 33,305 | 34,288 | 35,434 | 35,461 | 35,033 | 33,727 | 33,927 | 34,011 |
| Waitlist Remediation Income Eligible | 2,424  | 2,428  | 2,435  | 2,411  | 2,345  | 2,296  | 0  | 0  | 0  | 0  | 0  | 17  |
| **Total Children** | **56,533** | **56,345** | **56,975** | **57,697** | **57,361** | **58,514** | **57,148** | **57,011** | **56,707** | **54,653** | **54,824** | **54,712** |
|  |  |  |  |  |  |  |  |  |  |  |  |  |
| \* January through June data based on billed actuals |  |  |  |  |  |  |  |  |
| \*\* July through December data based on CCFA placement information |  |  |  |  |  |

## Appendix D: Income Eligible Waitlist Demographic Breakdowns

EEC maintains a waitlist of Income Eligible families who are seeking child care financial assistance. EEC uses an online self-serve waitlist program (KinderWait) for families to update and track their record directly. EEC’s financial assistance procedures provide that “inactive” records (i.e., 12 or more months of no applicant activity) are to be removed and archived from the waitlist; this procedure is utilized in order to keep the waitlist current.

Waitlist by Age Group (over time):

|  |  |  |  |  |  |  |  |  |  |  |  |  |
| --- | --- | --- | --- | --- | --- | --- | --- | --- | --- | --- | --- | --- |
| **2015** | **Jan** | **Feb** | **Mar** | **Apr** | **May** | **Jun** | **Jul** | **Aug** | **Sep** | **Oct** | **Nov** | **Dec** |
| Infants | 3,730 | 3,780 | 3,877 | 4,028 | 4,085 | 4,089 | 4,212 | 4,160 | 4,323 | 4,306 | 4,207 | 4,172 |
| Toddlers | 5,082 | 5,147 | 5,471 | 5,620 | 5,842 | 5,716 | 5,763 | 5,748 | 5,735 | 5,674 | 5,559 | 5,501 |
| Preschool | 6,019 | 6,061 | 6,506 | 6,893 | 7,310 | 7,284 | 7,315 | 7,182 | 6,474 | 5,879 | 5,539 | 5,484 |
| School Age | 10,590 | 10,448 | 10,982 | 11,427 | 11,761 | 11,217 | 10,889 | 11,139 | 11,192 | 11,022 | 10,690 | 10,602 |
| **Total I/T/P** | **14,831** | **14,988** | **15,854** | **16,541** | **17,237** | **17,089** | **17,290** | **17,090** | **16,532** | **15,859** | **15,305** | **15,157** |
| **Total** | **25,421** | **25,436** | **26,836** | **27,968** | **28,998** | **28,306** | **28,179** | **28,229** | **27,724** | **26,881** | **25,995** | **25,759** |

Waitlist Activity:

|  |  |  |  |  |  |  |  |  |  |  |  |  |
| --- | --- | --- | --- | --- | --- | --- | --- | --- | --- | --- | --- | --- |
| **2015** | **Jan** | **Feb** | **Mar** | **Apr** | **May** | **Jun** | **Jul** | **Aug** | **Sep** | **Oct** | **Nov** | **Dec** |
| **Total on Waitlist** | **25,421** | **25,436** | **26,836** | **27,968** | **28,998** | **28,306** | **28,179** | **28,229** | **27,724** | **26,881** | **25,995** | **25,759** |
|  # deactivated  | 1,675 | 1,775 | 1,775 | 1,625 | 1,799 | 4,312 | 16,523 | 3,677 | 3,764 | 3,519 | 3,149 | 1,784 |
|  # reactivated  | 128 | 113 | 113 | 113 | 154 | 269 | 361 | 304 | 332 | 189 | 142 | 158 |



## Appendix E: Mental Health Consultation Services Grant Information

**Early Childhood Mental Health Consultation Services Program**

EEC receives state funding to administer an Early Childhood Mental Health Consultation Services program, which provides resources to support young children and their families experiencing emotional and behavioral challenges. The Early Childhood Mental Health Consultation Services program promotes school success and healthy social-emotional development, and aims to reduce the suspension and expulsion rate in early education and care settings. In FY2016, EEC awarded level-funded continuation grants to the FY15 Early Childhood Mental Health grantees, as follows:

|  |  |  |  |
| --- | --- | --- | --- |
| **FY2016 Grantees** | **Amount Awarded** | **Region** | **Cities and Towns Served** |
| Behavioral Health Network | $280,241 | Western | 102 |
| Community Healthlink | $175,596 | Central | 65 |
| Enable, Inc. | $155,315 | Northeast, Metrowest, Southeast | 60 |
| Justice Resource Institute, Inc. | $225,843 | Southeast, Cape and Islands | 69 |
| MSPCC | $267,685 | Northeast | 50 |
| The Home for Little Wanderers | $145,320 | Metro Boston | 5 |
| **Total**  | **$1,250,000** |  | **351** |

Below is data on the children, families, educators and programs served through the Early Childhood Mental Health Grant program in 2015:

|  |
| --- |
| **Early Childhood Mental Health Consultation Services Provided - Mid Year Comparison** |
| ***Measures:*** The number of programs, classrooms, educators which received ECMH consultation services; hour of consultation services delivered, and children that benefitted from consultation services delivered. |
|  | **Received ECMH Consultation Services** |  |  |
| **Performance Period** | **Programs / FCC Homes** | **Classrooms/ FCC Homes** | **Educators** | **Consultation Hours Provided** | **Children Who Benefitted from Consultation** |
| **January - June 2015**  | **315** | **489** | **1,438** | **8,281** | **7,645** |
| **July - Dec 2015**  | **318** | **521** | **1360** | **7,240** | **7,806** |

|  |
| --- |
| **Child and Family-Focused Childhood Mental Health Consultation Services Delivered** |
| ***Measures****:* The number of children who received child-family focused ECMH consultation services; hours of consultation services delivered, and the integration other systems of support. |
| **Performance Period** | **Children Received Child/Family Focused Consultation** | **Hours of Consultation Services Provided** | **% of Children / Families Also Received Intensive Therapeutic Intervention** | **% of Children/ Families Also Received Early Intervention (EI) or Special Education**  |
| **January - June 2015**  | **638** | **9,389** | **Data not available** | **Data not available** |
| **July - Dec 2015**  | **611** | **5,965** | **21%** | **18%** |

|  |
| --- |
| **Behavioral Issues Identified in Children who Received Child- family Focused Consultation Services** |
| **January - June 2015** | **July - December 2015** |
| Peer relations/social skills (difficulty taking turns, sharing, negotiating, social bullying) | Aggression (biting, hitting, etc.--peers and adults) |
| Aggression (biting, hitting, etc.--peers and adults) | Peer relations/social skills (difficulty taking turns, sharing, negotiating, social bullying) |
| Oppositional (defiant, disobedient) | Oppositional (defiant, disobedient) |
| Over activity/Impulsivity (restless, uncontrolled) | Attention (inability to focus, follow directions) |
| Attention (inability to focus, follow directions) | Over activity/Impulsivity (restless, uncontrolled) |
| History of trauma | History of trauma |

**Frequency of behavioral concerns identified for the children who received child -family focused consultation services by age-groups.**

*(Children with more than one behavioral concern were counted for each concern.)*

EEC currently monitors suspensions and expulsions for children in programs that receive mental health consultation services. Preliminary data for the first half of FY16 (July through December 2015) indicates low rates of expulsions amongst the programs receiving mental health consultation services for children who were identified as "at risk” for suspension or expulsion and who received child and family focused consultation services.

* 89% of the children served who were identified as "at risk” for suspension or expulsion were "retained successfully" or "retained, but still “at risk for suspension/ expulsion".
* 2% of the children transitioned to a program that could better meet their needs.
* FY16 mid-year reporting also indicates that 11 expulsions occurred during the first half of FY 2016.

The most frequent strategies used by the early childhood mental health consultation to successfully prevent or reduce suspension and expulsion in early education settings are *consultation to staff, modeling of strategies, individual behavior plans, consultation to parent, referrals to therapy and other case management supports*.

ECMH consultation involves general classroom/program and on-site child focused observations, which may include the use of evidenced based observation tools used to identify strategies for improving the learning environment and to assess children’s social-emotional and behavioral skills. ECMH consultants meet with educators and families to discuss the strengths and needs of the classroom and/or the child and work together to develop classroom management plans and/or individualized behavior plans to support the needs of specific children. ECMH consultants also provide on-site modeling/coaching to educators to provide guidance on how to provide appropriate responses to address challenging behaviors. If the child presents with behaviors that may require more intensive services, beyond the scope of consultation, the ECMH consultants will assist programs and families in locating and accessing appropriate additional services, which may include Early Intervention, special education services and/ or behavioral health services through a community-based mental health service provider.

## Appendix F: Race to the Top - Early Learning Challenge Sustainability Plan

**Massachusetts Race to the Top - Early Learning Challenge Sustainability Plan**

***December 15, 2015***

**Introduction**

When Massachusetts became a first round grantee of the Race to the Top Early Learning Challenge (RTT-ELC) in 2012, the state was well poised to use the $50M in grant funding to expand and enhance several key, existing initiatives. The state created the Department of Early Education and Care (EEC) in 2005, which sits under the Executive Office of Education along with its sister agencies, the Department of Elementary and Secondary Education (DESE) and the Department of Higher Education (DHE). In addition to the oversight of early education and care programs, EEC provides information and referral services, inclusive programming for children with special needs, parenting and family support through our Coordinated Family and Community Engagement (CFCE) grantees, and professional development opportunities for educators in the early education and out of school time field that are coordinated by regional Educator and Provider Support (EPS) grantees. EEC had also piloted a quality rating and improvement system. The four years of RTT-ELC provided Massachusetts an opportunity to expand on these systems to increase the quality of programs, services and providers.

**Focus Area - Quality Rating and Improvement System:**

In 2010, Massachusetts implemented a Quality Rating and Improvement System (MA QRIS) and established the requirement for programs receiving subsidies or other agency funding to participate in the MA QRIS. Further development of the MA QRIS was the largest investment made with RTT-ELC funds. Investments include the establishment of a Program Quality Unit to provide direct support to programs and to assign quality ratings. RTT-ELC also funded quality improvement grants and other supports as well as targeted professional development for specific MA QRIS standards. Due in large part to the enhancement and expansion of the MA QRIS that the RTT-ELC funded, Massachusetts has earmarked $4M in funding for MA QRIS for SFY16, which runs from July 2015 through June 2016. These funds will support the sustainability of several MA QRIS-related activities, as described below.

**Program Quality Unit:**

**Summary**: The Program Quality Unit staff offer technical assistance, and develop policies, program supports, and resources for programs to increase participation in MA QRIS and advance them to higher MA QRIS levels. Before RTT-ELC, programs' ratings were based on self-assessments. EEC did not have the staffing capacity to conduct site visits at all programs to verify quality, and all document review was done by one staff person. Over the four years of the grant, the new Program Quality Unit was able to verify the quality ratings of over 5,000 programs, including 192 level three and 15 level four programs. RTT-ELC funds also support staff positions within the Department of Public Health. Over the four years of RTT-ELC, the Child Health Specialist and Health Advisors have developed health policies, a training and self assessment for programs at the MA QRIS Level 2, and training for Child Care Health Consultants. Health Advisors, who work out of EEC's regional offices, also provided technical assistance to licensing and program quality staff.

The Associate Commissioner of Program Quality Supports convenes and/or participates in several work groups that advise EEC on the development of MA QRIS policies and revisions. This work includes developing School Based Standards for early education programs that are operated by public schools. Developing these standards will encourage participation by school based preschool and preschool special education programs, which have the lowest rate of participation of all MA QRIS program types. Efforts are also underway to develop quality standards for kindergarten classrooms that align with MA QRIS program standards. These kindergarten standards will promote alignment between our early care and education and K-12 systems and include key elements of quality such as the use of formative assessment to guide individualized instruction.

**Sustainability**: There is state funding dedicated to supporting MA QRIS for SFY16. These funds will support all of the regional Program Quality Specialists positions within EEC, in addition to staff located in our central office that will provide leadership to the Program Quality Unit, as well as professional development and policy support. These funds will also support a Child Health Specialist and two regional Health Advisor positions in partnership with the Department of Public Health.

In addition to financial support for maintaining these MA QRIS staffing positions, organizational changes within EEC will further integrate quality initiatives into the all areas of the agency's work. The Program Quality Unit is now overseen by an Associate Commissioner of Program Quality Supports, who reports directly to the Deputy Commissioner of Legal and Field Operations. This change will increase the alignment of field operations as well as the agency's overall approach to supporting a system of high quality early education and care in the state.

**Durable Goods Quality Improvement Grants**

**Summary**: Over $7M of RTT-ELC funds were directly distributed to programs to purchase durable goods. Adjustments were made in the administration of the Quality Improvement Grants during years three and four of RTT-ELC to require grantee programs to work with a technical assistance provider to develop a Continuous Quality Improvement Plan (CQIP) and ensure that the durable goods they purchase through the grant align with the quality improvement goals in their CQIP.

**Sustainability**: The legislation that allocated state funding for quality initiatives in the agency's SFY16 budget specifically earmarked at least $1M for quality improvement grants. EEC will continue to use the Environmental Rating Scale (ERS) tool to assess the impact of the state funded Quality Improvement Grant on programs and providers. A preliminary analysis of the last round of RTT-ELC Quality Improvement grantees shows a high correlation between areas of improvement on the grantees' ERS scores, and the goods purchased through the grant. These results will provide EEC and its partners with valuable data for SFY17planning.

**Business Planning Training**

**Summary**: Realizing that many early education and care programs struggle to develop business plans that are well structured and actionable, and therefore have difficulty meeting related MA QRIS standards, EEC used RTT-ELC funds to develop a Business Planning Course and train the trainer model. The course is designed so that participants have a business plan that meets MA QRIS program standards upon completion. Since the course was completed in grant year 2015, over 20 trainers have been trained throughout the state.

**Sustainability**: The development and implementation of a training of trainers ensures that the Business Planning Course will be available to early educators after RTT-ELC ends. Most of the trainers that participated in the training of trainers are connected with Family Child Care Systems, and the Educator and Provider Support network, which is the state's core professional development system. Also, EEC is working on increasing its capacity to provide high quality online trainings within the next one to two years. Once this is accomplished, the Business Planning Course will be available through self guided online modules that have already been developed.

**Focus Area: Comprehensive Assessment System**

Massachusetts used RTT-ELC funds to support early childhood screening and assessment related activities, including the Massachusetts Kindergarten Entry Assessment (MKEA). Though some activities required adjustments during implementation, Massachusetts has made great strides over the four years of the RTT-ELC in efforts to develop a comprehensive system of screening and assessment for children birth through third grade. Strategies included leveraging the network of Coordinated Family and Community Engagement (CFCE) grantees that coordinate local network of providers and services, many of whom provide developmental screening services. EEC was also able to leverage and strengthen its partnership with DESE through their collaborative work on MKEA. The DHE, EEC and ESE were original members of the Massachusetts team involved with the National Governors' Association (NGA) Early Learning Policy Academy that focused on building a policy for a comprehensive assessment system. Though the NGA Policy Academy ended in 2014, the state team continues to meet on birth through grade three policy issues as part of the Birth through Grade Three Advisory Group.

**Developmental Screening: Ages and Stages Questionnaire**

**Summary:** Massachusetts' primary strategy for promoting developmental screening, particularly for children at risk of delays and disabilities, was to use RTT-ELC funds to purchase both online and hard copy versions of the Ages and Stages Questionnaire (ASQ) and the ASQ-Social Emotional for its CFCE network. RTT-ELC allowed EEC to purchase ASQ kits for new CFCE grantees after a competitive grant round in SFY15 and to provide training and supports to all grantees in providing developmental screenings and referrals.

**Sustainability**: EEC has identified state funds that will support the continued purchase of ASQ materials for CFCE grantees once RTT-ELC ends, though funding for ongoing training will be limited in the future. Connecting families with developmental screening services is a core requirement for CFCE grantees, and will therefore be sustained without federal funds.

**Massachusetts Kindergarten Entry Assessment**

**Summary:** In its application for the RTT-ELC grant, Massachusetts laid out an ambitious plan to implement a state-wide kindergarten entry assessment. RTT-ELC also funds a variety of supports for districts participating in MKEA.

Over the course of the RTT-ELC grant Massachusetts has employed several strategies to improve implementation of MKEA. In 2013, EEC switched vendors to improve the delivery of training and technical assistance to school districts. More recently, Massachusetts worked with a research firm to conduct an alignment analysis of GOLD by Teaching Strategies and our early learning and development standards to customize the tool, reducing the number of indicators used in the assessment tool. Massachusetts had originally planned to require school districts to assess kindergarten children across all domains by the 2014-2015 school year. However, there was persistent feedback from the field that assessing each kindergarten child on all domains for MKEA in addition to the other assessments required by their district was too time consuming. In response, Massachusetts has limited the requirements for school districts to assess children in the domains of social emotional development and cognition since many assessments used by school districts do not address these areas.

**Sustainability:** Massachusetts has implemented several strategies that will inform the continued development of a kindergarten entry assessment. There are also several, state-level initiatives that are currently focused on the development of a comprehensive and aligned assessment system for children birth through third grade. During the no-cost extension period, EEC and DESE will create a webinar and vignettes that can be posted on state websites for ongoing use after RTT-ELC ends. Massachusetts has also hired a vendor to develop recommendations on future implementation of MKEA based on best practices of other states and key informant interviews with school district staff and Readiness Centers who provide regional support for MKEA. The final report is due in mid-December 2015.

Massachusetts has a reinvigorated focus on early childhood assessment within the state's educational system. The work of the Birth through Third Grade Advisory Group has grown in both size and level of state leadership involvement since being established during the NGA Policy Academy in 2013. The group now includes staff from EEC that are involved in Early Intervention, home visiting, family support as well as staff from the Department of Public Health. DHE maintains an Associate Commissioner as their founding member on the Committee and the Undersecretary of Education has recently taken a leadership in the Group. Since the assessments used in public schools are largely determined by local school districts, the Birth through Third Grade Advisory Group is preparing to visit several communities to learn more about what assessments are taking place locally throughout the state. This work will help the state understand how to support school districts align assessment practices, thereby reducing the work load while supporting best classroom practice. In July 2015, Harvard University Professor Nonie Lesaux, Ph.D. was appointed Chair of the Board of Early Education and Care. Chair Lesaux is a national expert on reading development and co co-chairs of the state's Early Literacy Expert Panel, which is focusing on the use of child screening and assessments to improve third grade literacy outcomes.

With the lessons learned through implementing MKEA during RTT-ELC and the current momentum of the state's educational leadership, Massachusetts is well poised to continue and expand its efforts to develop a comprehensive birth through third grade assessment system that includes a state-wide assessment of children at kindergarten entry. Massachusetts' federal Preschool Expansion Grant award also provides an opportunity to implement new and improved strategies to support kindergarten assessment, as well as the collaboration and data sharing between preschool and kindergarten classrooms to facilitate transitions.

**Focus Area - Evidence Based Family and Community Engagement and Supports**

For this focus area, RTT-ELC funds were used to enhance and expand the existing work of the CFCE grantees. Projects include strengthening evidence-based services such as family literacy, family support based on the Brazelton Touchpoints approach, adult literacy and financial literacy. RTT-ELC funds also supported the activities aimed at increasing the capacity of local museums and libraries to support early childhood learning and school readiness.

**Evidence Based Family Literacy**

**Summary** SFY15, the CFCE grant was awarded through a competitive bidding process. This provided an opportunity for the state to increase the emphasis on evidence-based family literacy programming as a required service of the grant. CFCE grantees will continue to offer literacy programming moving forward, although at a reduced level in the absence of RTT-ELC funds.

**Financial Literacy**

**Summary**: For this activity, EEC partnered with the Massachusetts Association of Community Action Programs (MASSCAP) to develop and deliver professional development for CFCE grantees and other community based organizations, including Head Start and Community Action Programs on providing financial literacy services to families. Trainings were followed by two communities of practice within each region of the state to support participants in implementing knowledge gained from the trainings. In addition to the in-person training, MASSCAP also developed three webinars and a train the trainer series.

**Sustainability**: As with the family literacy services, CFCE grantees will continue to connect families with financial literacy services as part of their required services with trained trainers and communities of practice available to support grantees after RTT-ELC ends. MASSCAP will continue to host the webinars developed under RTT-ELC and has also secured additional funding the Corporation for Enterprise Development and JP Morgan to participate in a Learning Partnership to further expand and improve financial capacity services.

**Museums and Libraries**

**Summary**: In the RTT- ELC grant application, EEC articulated its vision for strengthening the basic foundation of our early learning system by increasing capacity and support from other agencies and private sector partners in the community. During the past four years, EEC has worked in partnership with Boston Children's Museum (BCM) to implement a statewide strategy that provides a shared framework and set of resources that bolsters the capacity of museums and libraries, in partnership with EEC’s CFCE grantees, to support the optimal development of all children and support families as their child’s first teacher.

Our collaboration has included the development of content in school readiness, literacy, STEM (Science, Technology, Engineering and Math), and brain building activities through. EEC's "Brain Building in Progress" campaign. As content was developed, training was offered across the state for museum and library staff as well as CFCE grantee staff. Over the course of the RTT-ELC grant, 52 museums and 119 libraries were trained in the use of these materials.

**Sustainability**: BCM will maintain a section on their website, which hosts all of the materials that have been developed for this project, downloadable in multiple languages. In addition, BCM was recently awarded a multi-year Institute for Museums and Libraries grant to continue and build on the foundation that has been established through their RTT-ELC funded work. With this funding BCM will to continue supporting local museums and libraries in offering activities and events that promote child development and school readiness.

**Evidence-Based Family Support: Brazelton Touchpoints**

**Summary**: In EEC will continue to support the use of the Touchpoints model. Additional support for Brazelton Touchpoints Model will be included in communities of practice held as part of the Massachusetts Special Education grant.

**Adult Literacy**

**Summary**: Through a partnership with IBM and DESE, EEC sought to supplement existing adult literacy programs with the addition of an IBM family literacy resource. The intention of this initiative was to engage and support families of high needs children to promote school readiness for their children through the use of the IBM Reading Companion software, and the provision of information and techniques to enable parents to support literacy development in their children. IBM donated the Reading Companion software to adult literacy programs supported by DESE to bolster their programming.

**Sustainability**: This project will not be continued after RTT-ELC. Though the model was promising, participation was lower than expected, especially for families with young children. Also, IBM discontinued the Reading Companion Software in 2014.

**Focus Area: Sustaining Program Effects in the Early Elementary Grades**

The aim of the activities Massachusetts carried out in this focus area was to strengthen the elements of an aligned system of education from birth through college and career readiness. The majority of funding in this area went directly to local community coalitions and regional collaborations with a small portion dedicated to the development of leadership within these local partnerships. While the funding for these specific activities will not continue post RTT-ELC, the local leadership and system structures developed through these activities will continue to be supported by leadership at the local and state level. The state also recently issued a competitive Preschool Expansion Planning grant to fund additional high needs communities based on the framework of the state's federal Preschool Expansion Grant, which includes a strong emphasis on birth through third grade alignment.

**Early Educators Leadership Institute**

**Summary**: The Early Educators Fellowship Institutes (EEFI), which started in 2010, is a community-based leadership series. From 2013 through 2015, RTT-ELC funds supported three series of EEFI for early educators and administrators with an average of 100 participants in each series. Each institute focused on the system elements of high quality early education and care with recruitment efforts for the third Institute focusing on the communities that were participating in our Birth to Third Grade Alignment grants, which are described below.

**Sustainability**: Currently, there is not funding available to continue these Institutes after RTT-ELC. The leadership and networks that were built through these Institutes will continue to contribute to high quality early education and care as part of a comprehensive birth to third grade system.

**Birth to Third Grade Alignment Grants**

**Summary**: EEC has invested RTT-ELC funds to help communities build alignment among systems serving all young children and their families. The Birth to Grade Three Alignment Grants focus on strengthening the existing birth through third grade infrastructure within targeted high need communities. In 2012, EEC awarded the Birth to Grade Three Alignment Grants to five communities and in spring 2014, EEC awarded additional funding to these five communities, as well as an additional seven communities.

For the communities who received initial funding, EEC partnered with a private non-profit organization to analyze the grantees' work and created a website called the Learning Hub. This website shares information about the alignment initiatives being conducted locally and nationally, shares promising practices, and highlights relevant research. This organization has also provided guiding support to new grantees as they began to implement their projects.

**Sustainability**: Five of the Birth to Third Grade grantees are participating in the Massachusetts Preschool Expansion grant. In addition to providing high quality preschool to four year olds, grantees will work to strengthen their alignment efforts including the use of formative assessment as a tool to inform kindergarten transition. Several of the grantee communities that are not participating in the federal Preschool Expansion Grant will leverage the work they did under RTT-ELC to apply for the state Preschool Expansion Planning grant.

**Readiness Centers**

**Summary**: Massachusetts used Race to the Top (K-12) to create six Regional Readiness Centers which are multipurpose and collaborative centers focused on improving the quality of teaching both across the education continuum and across Massachusetts. They are managed and operated by a regional consortium of partners that include public and private institutions of higher education, school districts, early education and out-of-school-time providers, educational collaboratives, non-profit organizations, businesses and community partners. The core functions of the Readiness Centers is to provide high-quality professional development to educators in early education and out-of-school-time programs, K-12 institutions, and higher education institutions that address both regional needs and statewide priorities.

EEC specifically allocated RTT-ELC funding to the Readiness Centers to expand regional capacity for academic advising and career counseling for early educators and to ensure services are aligned and consistent across regions of the state. The Readiness Centers also provided professional development related to the MA QRIS and MKEA. As part of their work, the Readiness Centers created a website that outlines the higher education pathway for early educators in each region.

**Sustainability**: The website developed by the Readiness Centers will be maintained and updated after the grant ends, but the Readiness Centers will not continue, at least in their present form. The majority of the funding for the Readiness Centers came from the state's Race to the Top grant, which ended in 2014. Since then, the Readiness Centers have been operating on an average budget of $100,000 per year of RTT-ELC funding and have no identified funding to maintain their current activities once the grant ends. However, one Readiness Center in Western Massachusetts will maintain activities that support alignment and quality for early education certificate and degree programs in that region.

**Focus Area: Standards Validation and Alignment**

Massachusetts carried out several major activities under RTT-ELC aimed at ensuring our program quality standards truly indicate increasing levels of quality and that our early learning and development standards are comprehensive and aligned. RTT-ELC funds supported research by leading experts in the field of early education and care to examine the validity of our MA QRIS program standards and to ensure that our learning standards cover all domains of development and are aligned both vertically across age ranges and horizontally between state and national standards. RTT-ELC also provided Massachusetts the opportunity to develop and implement new preschool and kindergarten standards that address the importance of social emotional development and the needs of dual language learners.

**QRIS Validation Study**

**Summary**: EEC hired the University of Massachusetts Donahue Institute to conduct a study of the MA QRIS that validates whether the tiers in the MA QRIS accurately reflect differential levels of program quality, and assess the extent to which changes in quality ratings are related to progress in children's learning, development, and school readiness. Programs were randomly selected for the participation in the Validation Study from a list of all programs currently participating in the MA QRIS, resulting in 128 programs participating in the study. A final report of findings will be available in early 2016.

**Sustainability**: The validation study is a research activity that was not intended to be continued post RTT-ELC. However, the results of the study will be used to revise the standards as needed over the next year. Massachusetts is also planning to use state funds to support additional research to inform the continued improvement of our MA QRIS including a cross walk of professional qualification requirements for early educators licensed by EEC and teachers licensed by the DESE.

**Early Learning Standards Alignment Study**

**Summary**: Starting in 2012, EEC partnered with Sharon Lynn Kagan, Catherine Scott-Little, Jeanne Reid, and their teams at Teachers College, Columbia University, and the University of North Carolina at Greensboro, to conduct an 18-month analysis of the content and alignment of the Massachusetts early learning and development documents. The study included an evaluation of the ways in which the current standards for young children, ages birth to five, are aligned with the state’s kindergarten standards, the Head Start Child Development and Early Learning Framework, and the kindergarten-level Common Core standards. Additionally, the study focused on understanding if the Massachusetts standards for young children are aligned with developmental assessment tools. The results affirm that Massachusetts has a solid set of standards for infants, toddlers and preschoolers, but could strengthen and improve their alignment by being attentive to the domains of social and emotional development, and approaches toward play and learning.

**Sustainability**: The standards alignment study was not intended to be on-going and was completed in 2013. However, as a result of the study, Massachusetts is currently working to implement newly adopted preschool and kindergarten standards in the areas of Social Emotional Development and Approaches to Play and Learning (see below).

**Preschool and Kindergarten Standards: Social and Emotional Development and Approaches to Play and Learning**

**Summary**: In August 2014, EEC contracted with the University of Massachusetts Boston to develop learning standards in the domains of Social-Emotional Development and Approaches to Play and Learning for preschool and kindergarten based on recommendations from the alignment study described above.

In 2015, the standards were approved by the EEC Board. The standards and accompanying guidelines have been translated into Spanish, Portuguese, Haitian Creole, and Simplified Chinese. The professional development plan for the new standards will include an online course and a train the trainer model. Trainings will be delivered to the field during the no-cost extension period in 2016.

**Sustainability**: The standards have been distributed among the field and training on the new standards is being developed for both in-person and web-based training, which will be implemented in 2016. The new early learning standards will integrated into the MA QRIS program standards as well as the state's professional development system.

**Early English Language Development Standards**

**Summary**: Massachusetts partnered with the World-Class Instructional Design and Assessment Institute from the University of Wisconsin-Madison to develop Early English Language Development Standards (E-ELDS). The E-ELDS help practitioners to identify a child's language abilities in English and their home language, set reasonable expectations given the child's abilities, and learn how to scaffold language support in English and the home language so that the child succeeds in school.

RTT-ELC supported numerous activities to promote the E-ELDS among educators and families including a state wide conference to raise awareness of the standards, webinars on each component of the standards and the development of a cadre of 75 trainers. Additionally, regional focus groups were held to inform parents and families of the newly adopted E-ELDS and promote the important role that home language plays in English acquisition and school readiness.

**Sustainability**: Through the efforts of our Head Start State Collaboration Office, Massachusetts had imbedded the E-ELDS into our system of early education and care. The standards have been imbedded into the MA QRIS program standards and training on the standards is supported through our EPS grantees. In addition to the cadre of trainers, Massachusetts has also invested in the development of a train the trainer module. Additional trainings on the E-ELDS will be held during the no-cost extension period to further increase awareness and use of the standards and WIDA will continue to host online trainings.

**Focus Area: Interagency Collaboration**

EEC partnered with several agencies within the Massachusetts Executive Office of Health and Human Services along with the Department of Housing and Community Development to implement a variety of strategies to improve the physical and social emotional health of children and the stability of their families. These strategies target children and families that face multiple barriers including homelessness, mental illness, and involvement in child welfare. Several key strategies and resources developed over the four year grant period will be sustained through agencies' policies and as well as state funding for select positions that will be maintained in our partner agencies.

**Department of Children and Families (DCF)**

**Summary**: EEC's interagency partnership with the DCF was expanded through RTT-ELC to promote early childhood and child development within the child welfare system. DCF's Early Childhood Specialist and Policy Analyst, which were positions created under RTT-ELC, worked to revise agency policies and practices to ensure case workers' focus on children's education includes the importance of high quality early education and care for struggling families. A full day training in early childhood development and learning for new social workers with a 6-month follow-up session is now part of the agency's standard orientation process. Other ways practices have been infused with early childhood include a resource page on DCF's intranet with information and resources on early childhood development, and a new home visiting guide for social workers that includes developmental milestones and safe sleep materials.

To further support the effective use of EEC funded Supportive Child Care, DCF developed an enhanced Data Management Tool that increases the consistency of data management practices across each of the 29 DCF Area Offices. On-going webinars and technical support for Child Care Coordinators and area staff are offered on a consistent basis to help DCF and EEC identify gaps within the Supportive Child Care program and to better support providers, area offices and families.

**Sustainability**: The policies and resources developed by DCF using RTT-ELC funds will be sustained by the agency post RTT-ELC. DCF has secured funding for the Early Childhood Specialist Position through June 2016. The online and training resources to support DCF front line staff working with families of young children will also be sustained. Lastly, through the long standing relationship between DCF and EEC, the agencies will continue to collaborate on the management of contracted child care slots for DCF involved children.

**Department of Public Health (DPH)**

**Summary**: The interagency partnership between EEC and the DPH is focused on enhancing the ability of the state's system of early education and care to promote the physical and emotional health of young children and their families. Regional Health Advisors hired through RTT-ELC provided newly created Safe Sleep trainings for providers in all EEC regional offices. DPH collaborated with EEC’s EPS grantees to provide a four-part, strength-based training series that included trauma in early childhood, family substance use, parent mental health and exposure to violence to providers in all regions of the state including a training of trainers. The cadre of trainers includes represents the fields of early education, child welfare, housing, nursing and social work. DPH also played a key role in the design and implementation of a Pyramid Model Foundations training for staff working within homeless shelters (see below for further information). DPH also used RTT-ELC funds to purchase permission to use the Infant Mental Health Competencies developed by the Michigan Association for Infant Mental Health. EEC, DPH, the Massachusetts Association for Infant Mental Health and their partners have formed a working group to develop strategies for using this competency framework to strengthen our early childhood workforce.

**Sustainability**: The relationship between EEC and DPH was establish long before RTT-ELC and will continue after the grant has ended. DPH now sits on the Birth through Third Grade Advisory Group and meets with EEC staff regularly on efforts to implement the Infant Mental Health Competencies in the state. RTT-ELC funding allowed the two agencies to develop key health related policies and resources for programs including resources directly linked to the MA QRIS that will continue to be used post RTT-ELC. EEC has also identified state funding to maintain at a Regional Health Advisor through DPH as well as the Early Childhood Specialist through June of 2016. The two agencies will work together to advocate for all of the health positions to remain funded in the future.

**Department of Housing and Community Development (DHCD)**

**Summary**: EEC partnered with the Department of Housing and Community Development (DHCD) to help young homeless children and their families in the state. The DHCD Early Childhood Specialist, funded by RTT-ELC funds, disseminated information to over 60 shelters on training opportunities covering topics such as trauma, substance abuse, mental illness, nutrition and impact of domestic violence on young children. DHCD also collaborated with EEC, DPH, and Horizons for the Homeless Children, a community based program for homeless families, to develop and deliver a three-part intensive training and mentoring program based on the Center on the Social Emotional Foundations for Early Learning Pyramid Model. Approximately 80 shelter staff participated in the training as teams of direct service staff and at least one administrator. The training model linked the shelter teams with an early childhood mental health clinician with knowledge of the Pyramid Model and trauma-informed practice. The mental health clinicians participated in the trainings with their teams and then provided nine hours of mentoring. Clinicians receive support through an orientation, monthly Communities of Practice calls, as well as a face-to-face debrief at the end of the project.

**Sustainability**: A final report is being developed to capture the lessons learned and best practices from the training that will help to inform any related work in the future. Though the training was extremely successful and many families received resource and referral services from the DHCD Early Childhood Specialist, funding has not been identified to continue the position after RTT-ELC.

**Department of Mental Health (DMH)**

**Summary**: EEC's partnership the DMH was designed to strengthen the comprehensive system of mental health supports for children and families that are available throughout the state. Through RTT-ELC, DMH expanded its Infant Toddler Mental Health training, which has now been integrated in network of EPS grantees. In collaboration with the Children's Behavioral Health Initiative (CBHI), an Infant and Early Childhood Mental Health Resources and Services guide was created with close to 2,000 copies distributed throughout the state to early childhood professionals. The guide is available on-line in both English and Spanish.

RTT-ELC funds also supported strength based, family and parenting support training for staff in clinical settings. DMH used RTT-ELC to support the participation of 28 In Home-Therapy Clinical supervisors at eight CBHI sites in a learning collaborative to expand their capacity and confidence in providing treatment and intervention to young children and their families with histories of trauma and serious emotional and behavioral challenges. DMH also worked with the Massachusetts Child Psychiatric Access Project (MCPAP) to offer three trainings on the Positive Parenting Program (Triple P), reaching 28 pediatricians and clinicians on skill training resources to parents with children with disruptive behaviors.

**Sustainability**: DMH has secured funding to sustain the DMH Early Childhood Specialist through June 2016. EEC and DMH are currently working on a proposal to create a Early Childhood Mental Health Specialist position at DMH that will be housed at EEC. This position will continue to work on activities implemented under RTT-ELC and would serve to coordinate and align the several mental and behavioral health initiatives that EEC is involved in and will also serve as an expert to inform agency policies and technical assistance to the field. Other RTT-ELC work carried out by DMH that will continue post RTT-ELC including the use of Triple P Parenting by trained MCPAP clinicians as well as the increase capacity for In Home Therapy Clinicians to better serve families with young children.

**Office of Refugee and Immigrant Services (ORI)**

**Summary**: EEC has partnered with ORI to support early learning and school readiness for immigrant and refugee children and their families. In collaboration with the Massachusetts Immigrant and Refugee Advocacy (MIRA) Coalition and the Multilingual Action Council at Wheelock College, ORI delivered a training, *New Start: Supporting Multilingual Young Children and Immigrant and Refugee Families*, for the CFCE grantees, Child Care Resources and Referral Agencies, MASS 2-1-1, and family and group providers, including Head Start. The trainings offered information on the impact of immigration policy on children and families, and child development and educational principles in the context of multilingual homes. There have been more than 800 participants in the New Start trainings. As a way of continuing dialogue started at New Start trainings, regional sessions were held quarterly after each training to provide a place for practitioners to meet quarterly and share approaches for working with immigrant and refugee populations.

Through small subcontracts supported through RTT-ELC, ORI funded two local organizations in Worcester (the African Community Education and the Southeast Asian Coalition), to provide outreach to specific refugee and immigrant communities (Liberian, Congolese, Vietnamese, Bhutanese), with the aim of providing awareness of available early childhood development resources.

**Sustainability**: ORI and MIRA are working with Tufts University to create a modified version of *New Start* training with the goal of offering it as an ongoing collaboration with the three organizations. Regional community learning groups formed after each New Start trainings to provide a place for practitioners will continue to meet quarterly to share ideas and approaches for working with immigrant and refugee families.

**Focus Area: Workforce Development**

Leveraging its partnerships in higher education and its system of EPS grantees, EEC used RTT-ELC funding to create two new and innovative professional development models that expand leadership capacity and directly improve classroom practice. Other activities carried out in this area were research based projects that aim to develop a clear understanding of how well the state's workforce are able to gain competencies as defined by its Workforce Knowledge and Competency Framework, and to develop a model to increase access to higher education for English Language Learners.

**Post Masters Certificate Program**

**Summary**: EEC partnered with the University of Massachusetts, Boston to develop a Post Master’s Certificate in Early Education Research, Policy, and Leadership (PMC) to launch a new generation of early childhood leaders in Massachusetts. The intention of the PMC is to support early childhood educators with Master’s degrees currently working in EEC-licensed or license-exempt programs to further their own knowledge, skills, and abilities while working to inform policy at the local, regional, and state level. The courses provide advanced study in early education research methods, policy, leadership, organizational change, and the science of child development and early learning. Over the four-year grant period, there were three cohorts of 15 students that completed the PMC Program.

**Sustainability**: The University of Massachusetts Boston will continue to offer the PMC Program after RTT-ELC. The University has also developed a doctoral program in early childhood education that accepts the 12 credits from the PMC Program and has established articulation agreements with three other institutes of higher education across the state. Since Massachusetts has a limited number of institutions that offer advanced degrees in early childhood education, the PMC Program helps to fill a void at the very top of the career latter for educators in the state.

**Peer Advising and Coaching Model**

**Summary**: In July 2012, EEC partnered with the Institute for Education and Professional Development (IEPD) and an advisory team of experts in coaching and mentoring to design a model for Peer Assistance and Coaching (PAC). The goal of PAC is to develop a coaching model to help programs improve quality as evidenced by meeting the MA QRIS program standards. The PAC model builds on the foundation that existing early childhood teachers and directors are well-equipped to support one another’s practices.

There were a total of 38 pairs of coaches and mentees that participated in two cohorts from 2013 to 2015. To facilitate the coach-mentee relationship, the model used an online platform, to capture video for reflective observation and feedback from their coach. The use of the platform has increased the frequency of coaching experiences without increasing the amount of travel between programs. The coaches received extensive training using the Classroom Assessment Scoring System (CLASS) tool as their framework as well as relationship-based training. A pre-post evaluation of the model using the CLASS tool showed improvement in mentees' classroom practice across all three domains.

**Sustainability**: Massachusetts is using the no-cost extension period to maintain use of the online platform to allow all EPS grantees to explore how the technology may enhance the coaching services they coordinate within their regions. The state is also exploring how other components of the model, including the training and peer learning components, can be continued through existing state funds. The PAC model has also been closely aligned with the support system for programs participating in MA QRIS.

**Validation Study of Educators' Competencies**

**Summary**: EEC contracted with the American Institutes for Research to conduct a two-year research study examining the relationships among educator supports, instructional practices, and child outcomes in early childhood settings (e.g., toddler-age and preschool-age classrooms or family child care settings) in Massachusetts. The second year of the study, concluded in 2014, focused on numeracy and literacy. Key findings of the research outline areas of improvement to help EEC and practitioners improve their support of early childhood educators and children.

 **Sustainability**: While this project ended in 2014, the findings from the research study will be used to inform EEC's strategies for increasing workforce competency.

**Higher Education for English Language Learners**

**Summary**: In 2012, EEC used RTT-ELC funds to work with Wheelock College on the design and implementation of a program for educators who are English Language Learners (ELL) to access higher education while providing the immediate content needed to improve practice with children birth to age five. The program included four early education courses, each with an English language support component. Participating students ; received four Wheelock credits for each of the courses they successfully completed.

In 2014, EEC modified this project in a continued effort to effectively support ELL providers. Working with the CAYL Institute, EEC developed a Career Lattice for ELL students entering into or advancing their career in the field of early education. A final report summarizing research findings and recommendations from leadership institutes and focus groups on strategies for supporting ELL students in two and four year colleges will be completed in 2015.

**Sustainability**: The final report will be shared with the EEC's Board in the spring of 2016 and will be used to inform future strategies for supporting ELL educators.

**Focus Area: Early Childhood Information System (ECIS):**

**Summary**: In the first three years of the RTT-ELC grant, Massachusetts used grant funds to build ECIS, an early childhood data warehouse and reporting platform that can produce reports on child, program and educator data pulled from the agency's many web-base applications. Work was also completed to assign Statewide Student Identification number to children receiving subsidies. In the fourth year of the grant, an additional investment of RTT-ELC funds supported the development of a new Licensing and Education Analytical Database (LEAD) that will serve as foundation for new applications including a new licensing management application that will be rolled out by the end of 2015. The LEAD platform has been linked with the ECIS data warehouse so that agency information is centralized. In the no-cost extension period, additional grant funds will support the development of applications for our MA QRIS that will also be integrated into LEAD.

**Sustainability**: The investments Massachusetts made in its information technology will continue to benefit the agency for years to come. The new web-based applications will greatly increase the efficiency of licensing and program quality support staff and will provide EEC and the state will much higher quality data on programs, children and providers.

**Focus Area: Communications**

**Summary**: In 2010, the EEC utilized funding from the American Recovery and Reinvestment Act (ARRA) to launch a communications strategy and infrastructure campaign. This work led to the development of *Brain Building in ProgressSM* , a statewide public awareness initiative to raise awareness about the importance of early childhood development to the future prosperity of the Commonwealth. EEC jointly leads *Brain Building in ProgressSM* in partnership with the United Way of Massachusetts Bay and Merrimack Valley. The campaign promotes the importance of enriching environments in fostering healthy brain development in children, and the critical role that the public plays in providing positive experiences that support children's learning. RTT-ELC funds were used to expand the reach of *Brain Building in ProgressSM*, through efforts including: ad campaigns with state and local agencies, the development and dissemination of training on the science behind "brain building", and a complete redesign of the *Brain Building in ProgressSM* website (www.brainbuildinginprogress.org) which includes a searchable calendar of "brain building events" offered by EEC's Coordinated Family and Community Engagement networks across the state, a "brain building zone finder", tips on how to be a "brain builder", and featured campaign partners including the Massachusetts Bay Transit Authority, Registry of Motor Vehicles, and Vroom. In addition, the Department of Early Education and Care obtained a service mark in the Commonwealth of Massachusetts for the *Brain Building in ProgressSM* name and logo.

**Sustainability**: The United Way has agreed to continue to partner with EEC to maintain the *Brain Building in ProgressSM* website and to continue to promote the use of the materials and messages within local organizations and partners.

**Focus Area: Content Based Media Partnership**

**Summary**: Over the RTT-ELC grant period, Massachusetts partnered with WGBH, a public television station, to develop the *Resources for Early Learning* website. The website includes free early learning resources for educators and families, including professional development modules, videos, curriculum and activities. Many of the materials on the website leverage the WGBH's award-winning child series, *Peep and the Big Wide World* and all curriculum is aligned with the state's early learning standards. Several trainings on what is available on the website as well as how to use the resources with families and within programs have been held with Educator Provider Support and CFCE grantees.

**Sustainability**: WGBH is negotiating an agreement with PBS Learning Media to sustain the *Resources for Early Learning website* after RTT-ELC ends, as the state's IT infrastructure does not have the capacity to host the site. EEC will own and manage the www.resourcesforearlylearning.org domain, which will redirect to the Resources for Early Learning content on the PBS Learning Media website.

1. EEC Strategic Plan 2014-2019. Adopted by the Board of Early Education and Care on June 10, 2014. [↑](#footnote-ref-1)
2. School districts that choose to use an alternate observational tool/framework must submit a plan to ESE that describes how the tool/framework is used to understand children's development and learning, and how the observational data will be used to inform instruction. [↑](#footnote-ref-2)