

Request for Applications

RFA # 004-PDG-2021



TITLE: **Preschool Development Grant Birth through Five (PDG B-5) NC Pre-K Program Outcomes-Driven Pilot Project**

FUNDING AGENCY: NC DHHS/Division of Child Development and Early Education (DCDEE)

ISSUE DATE: June 30, 2021

RECEIPT DEADLINE: Applications, subject to the following conditions, must be received no later than **5:00 pm, July 30, 2021.**

EMAIL an electronic PDF of your application to the NC Division of Child Development and Early Education via this email: DCDEE.PDGContracts.Unit.RFA@dhhs.nc.gov.

The signature of an authorized official is required on the application face sheet. An electronic signature or an electronic scanned copy of the signed application face sheet will be accepted. **Only electronic application submissions via email will be accepted, i.e., do not mail, fax, or deliver copies of the application to DCDEE's physical or mailing address.**

INTENT TO APPLY: Eligible agencies and/or organizations interested in applying for this RFA are encouraged to notify DCDEE of their intent to apply via the following link <https://www.surveymonkey.com/r/D2KSYSL> no later than **5:00 pm on July 09, 2021**. Agencies are **not** required to notify of their intent to respond to this RFA; this information is requested to assist DCDEE in planning. DCDEE plans on hosting a Bidder's Conference as part of launching this RFA on **July 13, 2021 at 3:00pm**. https://zoom.us/webinar/register/WN_csqT-bRrReW2yIFoS4lvQ

DIRECT ALL INQUIRIES concerning this RFA in writing to:
Tilneil Gary, PDG Grant Manager:
Email address: DCDEE.PDGContracts.Unit.RFA@dhhs.nc.gov

Sharon Johnson, PDG Contracts Manager:
Email address: DCDEE.PDGContracts.Unit.RFA@dhhs.nc.gov

IMPORTANT NOTE: Questions concerning the specifications of any information contained within this Request for Applications will be received until **5:00 pm, July 09, 2021**. All questions must be received in writing, via electronic mail, to DCDEE.PDGContracts.Unit.RFA@dhhs.nc.gov. Responses to all questions received by the deadline will be posted on the Division of Child

Development and Early Education website <https://ncchildcare.ncdhhs.gov/Whats-New> no later than **5:00 pm on July 16, 2021**.

ELIGIBILITY: This RFA is open to public and private nonprofit organizations with a current 501(c)(3) standing that administer the NC Pre-Kindergarten Program for their county across the state. The applicant must also have experience implementing the Kindergarten Transition program or request an exception and include justification in the application to demonstrate the program has sufficient infrastructure in accordance with Every Student Succeeds Act (ESSA) (see details in Section V: Application Qualifications and Capacity) and Teaching Strategies GOLD. Rural and urban counties with experience implementing the Pyramid Model to fidelity in NC Pre-Kindergarten Programs will be prioritized.

FUNDING AVAILABILITY: This RFA for a three-year funding period (September 2021 – August 2022, September 2022 – August 2023, and September 2023 – August 2024). Approximately \$40,000 will be available for each year. Two contracts will be awarded through this RFA at no more than \$20,000 each per year. Should a carry forward option be granted to DCDEE by the federal funder, the same option will be available to the contractor. DCDEE will determine the actual funding amount based on the proposed execution of the project and the utilization of funds as outlined in the successful applicant's proposal, pending funding availability.

Preschool Development Grant Funding Source:

1. Funding Type	Discretionary
2. Federal Award Identification Number (FAIN)	90TP0056-02-00
3. Federal Award Date (see § 200.39 Federal award date)	12/03/2020
4. Total Amount of the Federal Award (awarded to DCDEE)	\$13,414,500
5. Federal award project description, as required to be responsive to the Federal Funding Accountability and Transparency Act (FFATA)	PDG B-5 Renewal Grants seek to empower state governments to lead the way in leveraging federal, state and local early care and education investments. Renewal grants will assist states in helping low-income and disadvantaged children to enter kindergarten prepared to succeed. In addition, these grants will help improve the transitions between early care and education settings and elementary school. The overall responsibility of the PDG B-5 Renewal Grant is to assist states in the coordination of existing early childhood funding streams, resulting in services being provided to more children birth through five in a mixed delivery system.

6. Name of Federal awarding agency, pass-through entity, and contact information for awarding official	Federal DHHS Administration for Children and Families, Office of Child Care NC DHHS/DCDEE 333 Six Forks Road Raleigh, NC 27609
7. CFDA Number and Name; the pass-through entity must identify the dollar amount made available under each Federal award and the CFDA number at the time of disbursement	CFDA# 93.434 ESSA Preschool Development Grants Birth Through Five
8. Identification of whether the award is R&D	No

Federal Requirements on indirect cost rates and calculations according to 2 C.F.R. 200.414:

1. If your agency has or establishes a Federal Negotiated Indirect Cost Rate (FNIR), then the agency is not allowed to charge the “de minimis” rate of 10% (or some other amount) for indirect costs, as directed by 2 C.F.R. 200.414(f).
2. Agencies with an FNIR are required to charge their agreed upon rate for their indirect costs and include cost items as determined by the FNIR in their indirect costs.
3. If your agency does not have and never had a FNIR, then your agency is allowed to negotiate a different rate or the “de minimis,” as per 2 C.F.R. 200.414(f).
4. Negotiation of indirect cost rates in excess of the “de minimis” rate of 10% are performed by the NC DHHS Office of the Controller, Cost Analysis and Administration section:

Cost Analysis/Federal Financial Reporting/Administration
DHHS Office of the Controller
NC Department of Health and Human Services
1050 Umstead Dr
Raleigh, NC 27699-2019
Phone: 919-855-3696

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I. INTRODUCTION

Early childhood is one of the most important developmental periods in a child's life. A child's experiences in the first years of his/her life significantly impact brain development and help to establish the foundation for future learning (Harvard University Center on the Developing Child). High-quality early childhood programs can capitalize on this period of growth and can have both short- and long-term impacts on child outcomes (Coalition for Evidence-Based Policy). In the short- and medium-term, children in these programs are less likely to need special education services; are less likely to become involved in the juvenile justice system; and are more likely to graduate from high school. In the longer-term, participating children are more likely to be employed and less likely to be dependent on government assistance (Karoly & Bigelow).

Within early childhood education, there is a growing focus on the importance of children's social and emotional development (SED). Social and emotional development in children's early years refers to children's emerging capacity to experience, regulate, and express a range of emotions; develop close, satisfying relationships with other children and adults; and actively explore their environment and learn. These skills lay the foundation for developing literacy, numeracy, and other cognitive abilities that are critical for success in school and life (National Conference for State Legislatures, 2019). Children who exhibit positive and age-appropriate social and emotional development are mentally healthier, tend to be happier, show greater motivation to learn, have a more positive attitude towards school, more eagerly participate in class activities, and demonstrate a higher academic performance than peers who exhibit social and emotional difficulties. Children who exhibit SED difficulties tend to have trouble following directions and participating in classroom learning activities. Children with SED difficulties are also more likely to suffer rejection by classmates, have low self-esteem, do poorly in school, and be suspended (Hyson 2004; Kostelnik, Whiren, Soderman, Rupiper, Gregory, 2014) (See Appendix G: for a full list of references).

Given the importance of children's social and emotional development for early education, the North Carolina Division of Child Development and Early Education (DCDEE) is launching a pilot focused on improving SED outcomes for NC children by training and supporting teachers in developing the skills needed to support SED.

North Carolina is committed to ensuring that young children are healthy, grow up safe and nurtured, and are well-supported in their learning. As part of this commitment, North Carolina outlined a cohesive vision and statewide goals for young children from birth through age 8 in the [North Carolina Department of Health and Human Services: Early Childhood Action Plan](#). The following goals having particular relevance for the NC Pre-K program:

- Goal 7: Social-Emotional Health and Resilience
- Goal 8: High-Quality Early Learning

- Goal 9: On Track for School Success
- Goal 10: Reading at Grade Level.

II. **BACKGROUND**

The North Carolina Division of Child Development and Early Education (DCDEE) is launching the NC Pyramid Model Coaching Pilot (“the pilot”) to improve social-emotional and educational outcomes for children enrolled in NC Pre-K classrooms through the implementation of evidence-based SED programs, rigorous outcomes measurement, and continuous improvement practices. The pilot directly supports the goals of the NC Pre-K program, as well as the State’s Early Childhood Action Plan (ECAP). The pilot is being administered by DCDEE in partnership with the North Carolina Department of Public Instruction (DPI) and is expected to run for three years. DCDEE and DPI will work together to support implementation. The existing NC State Preschool Pyramid Model (PPM) Leadership Team and to-be-established local leadership team will support the successful implementation of the project. The local leadership team will be responsible for oversight of local implementation of the pilot, including supporting and coordinating training and technical assistance to the pilot sites and coordinating with the Kingergarten Transition team.

Purpose of Pilot

The purpose of the pilot is to improve services, outcomes, and program evidence for NC children by implementing the Pyramid Model. A successful pilot will allow DCDEE and DPI to achieve three interrelated objectives:

1. Strengthen continuous improvement processes where educational leaders, coaches, and teachers routinely collect and use data effectively to adapt and improve processes, tools, and behaviors.
2. Gain insights into how to implement and scale the Pyramid Model in both private and public-school settings, and in both kindergarten and Pre-K settings
3. Increase evidence on how the Pyramid Model can change teacher behavior to improve children’s SED outcomes and decrease the rates of suspensions and expulsions

The pilot is complementary to the work of NC Pre-K contractors and their sites, and will run concurrently with DCDEE and DPI initiatives related to kindergarten transition, [Teaching Pyramid Observation Tool](#) (TPOT), and the measurement of child development and kindergarten readiness using [Teaching Strategies GOLD](#) (TS GOLD). Process measures and supplemental validation tools to measure child social-emotional development will also be rolled out as part of the implementation.

Pilot sites will need to have (or plan to have it in the near term) both a Kindergarten Transition (or alternative such as infrastructure, as aligned with the Every Student Achieves Act (ESSA)) and TS GOLD infrastructure. Building on that infrastructure, pilot sites will be provided with targeted technical assistance (TA) and coaching on the Pyramid Model Details of the support to be provided to pilot sites is provided in the section to follow - “Value to NC Pre-K Contract Administrators and Communities”.

TS GOLD enables educators to focus on and measure the knowledge, skills, and behaviors most predictive of school success and it can be used to assess all children, including English-language learners, children with disabilities, and children who demonstrate competencies beyond typical developmental expectations. In consultation with DPI, DCDEE has been working to implement the Kindergarten Transition Project, which focuses on instituting practices that support more successful transition of children from NC Pre-K in public and private settings into public kindergarten. DCDEE’s plans to scale TS GOLD are also complementary to the pilot. TS GOLD is an online observation-based assessment system which is being implemented statewide for both Pre-K and kindergarten, to assess, measure, and report on a child's progress on key developmental outcomes, including SED, in an ongoing way.

Description of pilot interventions

Pyramid Model - The Pyramid Model provides a tiered framework of evidence-based practices that when implemented with fidelity, can change teacher’s behavior to improve the social, emotional, behavioral, and academic outcomes of young children. SED in early childhood is defined by the Center on the Social and Emotional Foundations for Early Learning (CSEFEL) as “the developing capacity of the child from birth through five years of age to form close and secure adult and peer relationships; experience, regulate, and express emotions in socially and culturally appropriate ways; and explore the environment and learn—all in the context of family, community, and culture” (Yates, et. al., 2008).

The Pyramid Model focuses on building adults’ skills across three tiers so that they can support children’s SED:

- *Tier 1:* Universal supports for all children through nurturing and responsive relationships and high-quality environments.
- *Tier 2:* Prevention which represents practices that are targeted social emotional strategies to prevent problems.
- *Tier 3:* Individual intensive interventions to the very small number of children with persistent challenges.

Across all the tiers, the Pyramid Model includes strengthening relationships and directly teaching emotional literacy, self-regulation, listening, friendship skills, and basic problem solving, while addressing how and when to identify and provide for children who may need individualized support provided in Tiers 2 and 3.

Currently in NC, support for implementing the Pyramid Model is provided in public school settings by DPI and Early Learning Network (ELN) at the UNC Frank Porter Graham Institute (FPGI), with 36 local education agencies receiving support for implementation in a subset of NC Pre-K programs within their districts. DCDEE provides support for the implementation of the Pyramid Model in child care centers through its Healthy Social Behaviors (HSB) Initiative operated by Child Care Resources Inc (CCRI) through NC's child care resource and referral system. Both ELN and HSB Pyramid Model coaching will support fidelity implementation of the Pyramid Model in NC Pre-K classrooms. Both the DPI/ELN and HSB coaching projects are based on the same principles and use similar or identical tools for training, assessing, and coaching (See Appendices C and D).

In the United States, the prevalence of young children exhibiting coping strategies given difficult circumstances that may present as “challenging behaviors” and deficits in social-emotional development is estimated to be 14% to 34% for preschool children (Hemmeter, Hardy, Schnitz, Adams, & Kinder, 2015). By improving teacher capacity to reduce challenging behaviors and decrease suspensions and expulsions, the evidence for the Pyramid Model as an effective approach to increase SED in young children (including children with disabilities) is well-documented in academic literature (e.g., Dunlap et al, 2006; Howes & Hamilton, 1993; Fox & Hemmeter, 2009; Webster-Stratton, Reid, & Hammond, 2004). See Appendix A for a summary of the literature on the impact of the Pyramid Model.

The Pyramid Model embeds implicit racial bias training and cultural responsiveness and has shown promise in improving racial equity in early childhood outcomes due to the over-representation of black children in suspension and expulsions. The Pyramid Model has been shown to reduce these disparities between black and white children. A 2016 study out of the Yale Child Study Center highlighted that black preschoolers are 3.6 times as likely to receive one or more suspensions relative to white preschoolers. Despite only making up 19% of preschool enrollment, black children make up 47% of preschoolers suspended one or more times, in part due to implicit racial bias as the possible source for this disproportionality (Gillam, Maupin, Reyes, Accavitti & Shic, 2016). A 2018 provider survey shows that 44% of administrators have suspended children and 51% have expelled children (as young as one year old) because of what is labeled as “challenging behavior”, with black children being significantly over-represented.

Family Intervention – Families are a child's first and lifelong teachers. Supporting family's knowledge, skills, and confidence can reduce the prevalence of mental health, emotional, and behavioral problems in children. As part of the pilot, selected NC Pre-K contract administrators will be expected to ensure the implementation of an evidence-based family intervention. The family intervention programs will need to have strong evidence of effectiveness in supporting parenting knowledge, attitudes, or practices for families of young children. The interventions should focus on helping families develop a secure attachment with their children or strengthening family skills around areas like improving

child behavior, improving children's social skills, reducing child depression and aggression, and enhancing family functioning. See Appendix B for a list of evidence-based family intervention examples.

Description of pilot supports from partnering agencies

Pyramid Model Technical Assistance (TA) Providers - TA providers will facilitate training and coaching of teachers to fidelity in the Pyramid Model and will help build capacity of centers and schools to sustain implementation. Public school classrooms will receive support from DPI and the Frank Porter Graham Early Learning Network and will follow DPI guidance for Preschool Pyramid Model implementation. Private child care centers will receive support through DCDEE from Child Care Resources Inc. (CCRI) and the NC CCR&R Council's Healthy Social Behaviors initiative.

Local Education Agency (LEA) - Selected LEAs are expected to support the implementation of the SED pilot intervention in public schools, facilitate follow up of NC Pre-K pilot participants in kindergarten, and facilitate data collection and sharing.

Department of Public Instruction (DPI) - DPI will be partnering with DCDEE to support the pilot. They will support LEAs in implementing the Pyramid Model at public school-based sites, facilitate planning to ensure coordination between Pyramid Model implementation in NC Pre-K classrooms and DPI SED-related initiatives at the kindergarten level, and support data collection and sharing.

Frank Porter Graham (FPG)- FPG, the independent evaluator will be the lead on designing and conducting retrospective evaluations in the first year of the project, using matched comparison groups, to establish baselines for the selected outcomes for children attending NC Pre-K, conduct a prospective evaluation (including a comparison group of classrooms), following children through the end of third grade, and provide TA to sites as needed to build data and evaluation capacity.

DCDEE recognizes the many demands facing NC Pre-K contractors, as well as schools and centers. The goal of the pilot is to provide resources and supports that complement current and/or planned efforts rather than create an additional burden. The aim is to be collaborative throughout the pilot process. DCDEE welcomes feedback and input throughout so that the pilot is structured and implemented in a way that enables NC Pre-K contractors to coordinate strong program delivery that benefits the lives of children.

III. SCOPE OF SERVICES

The purpose of the Pyramid Model Coaching Pilot is to improve services, outcomes, and program evidence for NC children by implementing the Pyramid Model. DCDEE is seeking to

partner with two administrating entities of the NC Pre-Kindergarten program, representing different counties, that will receive technical assistance and capacity building support. This technical assistance and capacity building support will enable the implementation of the Pyramid Model (the primary intervention) to achieve fidelity at the classroom level, as measured by the [Teaching Pyramid Observation Tool](#) (TPOT), which measures how well teachers are implementing the three tiers of the Pyramid Model. Student impact will be measured using the SED components of TS GOLD and a supplemental validation measure (for example, Devereux Early Childhood Assessment (DECA) or Screening for Social Interactions (SSI)). This measurement will be supported by Frank Porter Graham (FPG), the independent evaluator. TA will be provided by the designated DCDEE/DPI contractors to ensure consistent and high-quality implementation of the model. The pilot will also provide resources to support an evidence-based, family intervention (secondary intervention) aimed at improving SED outcomes for children in their community. Both the primary and secondary interventions are described in the “Background” section above as well as in Appendix A and B).

NC Pre-K contractors will be the grant recipients for the pilot. DCDEE expects that both the local Smart Start Partnership, Local Education Agency (LEA), and/or contracting agency be engaged in the application process. The successful applicant shall provide a detailed plan for completing the tasks outlined below.

1. Serve as the key point-of-contact for the pilot project, including communicating with involved public schools/private centers, Pyramid Model TA providers, the evaluator, and DCDEE and DPI as needed.
2. Participate as requested in the Local Leadership Team (LLT) continuous improvement strategies to ensure effective implementation of the pilot
3. Support the partnering NC Pre-K sites in completing the following:

Site Administrators

- Support and oversee pilot implementation at their respective sites and participate in local PM leadership teams
- Ensure implementation of the pilot in their private centers and public schools
- Schedule training, meetings and 1:1 coaching conversations
- Participate in training and support SED-related parent engagement activities
- Support and encourage teachers in strategy implementation as recommended by the fidelity coach
- Support data collection related to the intervention and its impact.
- Timely collection and reporting of data, including ongoing updates of TS Gold and other child assessments as determined (an estimated 3 hours per year)
- Timely submission of training surveys and project evaluations
- Promote policies/procedures which may be contra-indicated for PM fidelity achievement

Teachers

- Implement Pyramid Model practices in accordance with the training and coaching provided
- Support data collection related to the intervention and its impact
- Timely collection and reporting of data, including ongoing updates of TS Gold and other child assessments as determined (an estimated 3 hours per year)
- Timely submission of training surveys and project evaluations
- Provide feedback on strategy implementation
- Participate in training and support SED-related parent engagement activities

Expected Outcomes

The collection and reporting of data require an estimated 3 hours of teacher participation, 1 hour of student participation, and 45 mins of parent participation per year.

Child and Family Outcomes

- % of children with improved SED and cognitive development.
- % of families reporting increased engagement in their child's SED.

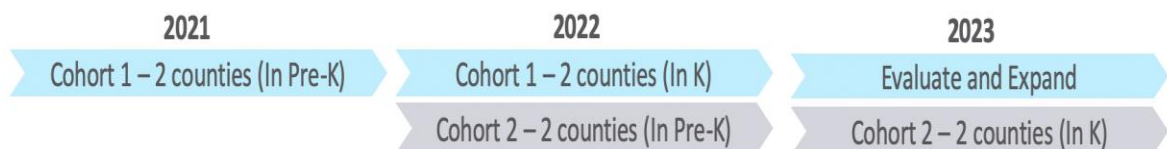
Classroom Level

- Increased % of NC Pre-K classrooms that are implementing the Pyramid Model to fidelity.
- Decreased % of NC Pre-K classrooms reporting occurrences of challenging behaviors.
- % of NC Pre-K teachers reporting an increase in their ability to engage families using evidence-based SED programs.

System Level

- NC Pre-K program administrators have an increased ability to monitor student gains on an ongoing basis, not only in SED but also attendance, behavior, and academics, and to use data to drive program improvements and better outcomes.
- Decrease in the occurrences of suspensions/expulsions, especially with Black children.

High-level Timeline



Year 1 (September 2021 - August 2022) - NC Pre-K Implementation [Cohort 1]

During the first year of the pilot, the two selected counties will be provided Technical Assistance to:

- Establish baseline expectations for outcomes for children who complete NC Pre-K programs based on historical data. This process will also include comparative analysis of NC Pre-K children and similar children who do not attend NC Pre-K.
- Select and prepare sites and classrooms that will be implementing the SED teacher and parent interventions.
- Prepare for and implement intensive training and coaching support for teaching staff in implementing the Pyramid Model for SED in NC Pre-K classrooms across the selected counties based on existing DPI and DCDEE Pyramid Model programs.
- Identify target classrooms where children in the pilot will likely be attending kindergarten and prepare for the introduction of the Pyramid Model in those classrooms.
- Engage families in the pilot using an evidence-based SED program.
- Collect pre/post data on classroom practices using TPOT and child gains in SED using relevant measures (for example, GOLD, DECA and/or, SSI)
- Monitor student gains on an ongoing basis, not only in SED but also attendance, behavior, and academics, and to use data to drive program improvements and better outcomes.
- Budgetary support and/or outcomes-based incentives for participating teachers and center/school administrators will be provided.

In the first year of implementation the county-specific timeline for this Technical Assistance may vary. A county-specific implementation plan will be developed in partnership with selected counties upon notice of award to ensure that the timeline is aligned with county priorities and time constraints.

Year 2 (September 2022 - August 2023) - NC Pre-K and K Implementation [Cohort 1 and Cohort 2]

During Year 2, the counties will receive the Pyramid Model (or similar SED components) in kindergarten, and resources for selected family-based supports in pilot kindergarten classrooms for the first cohort of children across the two counties. The interventions will be integrated into classrooms and target(s) for the outcome indicators will be established during the first year. Meanwhile, a second cohort of children will attend the pilot NC Pre-K classrooms. Supplemental training and coaching will be provided as needed to maintain teacher fidelity to and sustainability of the Pyramid Model as well as selected family-based interventions.

Year 3 (September 2023 - August 2024) - NC Pre-K and K Implementation [Cohort 1 and Cohort 2]

During Year 3, the second cohort of children will receive the Pyramid Model (or similar SED components) in kindergarten, and selected family-based interventions across the two

counties. The interventions will be integrated into classrooms and have agreed-upon target(s) for the outcome indicators used during the first year. Based on available funding and evaluation findings, DCDEE and partners will begin plans for expansion.

IV. Additional Requirements

1. **Reports** - Provide data as requested by DCDEE to meet federal reporting requirements. Submit to DCDEE reports of ongoing project efforts on a monthly, quarterly, and annual basis in compliance with the DCDEE/ DPI data-sharing agreement.
2. **Feedback** - Provide feedback at least monthly to DCDEE and stakeholders as requested throughout the duration of the grant to inform project efforts and monitor ongoing progress toward developing the alternative rate models.

V. APPLICANT QUALIFICATIONS AND CAPACITY

NC Pre-K contract administrators with sites who are implementing TS GOLD and a Kindergarten Transition (or similar) program will be eligible to submit an application for the pilot. Implementation of TS GOLD, Kindergarten Transition program (or infrastructure in place, as aligned with Every Student Succeeds Act (ESSA)), and Pyramid Model Readiness (see Appendix: E) are needed to support effective roll-out of the pilot. DCDEE and its partners aim to ensure inclusion of an urban and rural county and a mixture of public and private sites. An additional, unscored, factor in final decision will be the extent to which applicant counties offer DCDEE and DPI the opportunity to maximize use of their existing resources to support Pyramid Model implementation.

Selection Criteria for Applicants

Successful applicant has centers that have experience with TS GOLD and a Kindergarten Transition program (or can demonstrate that the program has sufficient infrastructure in place, as aligned with the Every Student Succeeds Act (ESSA)). When submitting an alternative to kindergarten transition, include a description of the leadership team, staff buy-in, data shared between preschool and kindergarten teachers, family involvement with kindergarten teachers, and how kindergarten teachers and pre-k teachers work together to provide an orientation visit to the receiving school.

- Applicants with prior experience implementing the Pyramid Model and demonstrate Pyramid Model readiness in school settings are preferred.
- Applicants with prior experience with kindergarten transition or demonstrate sufficient pre-k and kindergarten collaboration infrastructure, as aligned with the Every Student Succeeds Act (ESSA).

- Applicants propose a mix of public school and private center sites to implement the model.
- Key stakeholders (e.g., NC Pre-K contract administrator leadership, school district/principals, private centers) demonstrate commitment to implementing the Pyramid Model to fidelity (e.g. demonstrated staff capacity and time commitments).
- Applicants agree to implement the interventions (and related data collection) at both the pre-k and kindergarten level.
- Counties/districts provide information on the school(s) that their NC Pre-K children enter for kindergarten through a Kindergarten Transition program (or program that has sufficient K transition infrastructure in place, aligned with Every Student Succeeds Act (ESSA)).
- Stakeholders demonstrate a willingness to dedicate staff capacity to support the pilot.
- Applicants are currently implementing a family intervention, as described in Appendix B, and will be willing to expand it to include the families in this pilot, or be willing to implement one.

VI. LINE-ITEM BUDGET & NARRATIVE

The applicant shall submit a line-item budget for each of the three following contract terms: September 2021 – August 2022, September 2022 – August 2023, and September 2023 – August 2024 for no more than \$20,000 each year. The budgets must address the cost to complete deliverables outlined in this RFA. A narrative justification must be included for every expense listed in the budget template (see Appendix: H or Appendix I). Each justification should show how the amount on the line-item budget was calculated, and it should be clear how the expense relates to the project’s activities.

Travel Reimbursement Rates

Mileage reimbursement rates must be based on rates determined by the North Carolina Office of State Budget and Management (OSBM). Because mileage rates fluctuate with the price of fuel, the OSBM will release the “Change in IRS Mileage Rate” memorandum to be found on OSBM’s website when there is a change in this rate.

For other travel related expenses, please refer to the current rates for travel and lodging reimbursement, presented in the chart below. However, please be advised that reimbursement rates periodically change. DCDEE will only reimburse for rates authorized in OSBM’s North Carolina Budget Manual or adopted by means of an OSBM Budget Memo. These documents are located here: https://www.osbm.nc.gov/budman5-travel-policies#TP5_1.

Current Rates for Travel and Lodging

Meals	In State	Out of State
Breakfast	\$8.60	\$8.60
Lunch	\$11.30	\$11.30
Dinner	\$19.50	\$22.20
<i>Total Meals Per Diem Per Day</i>	<i>\$39.40</i>	<i>\$42.10</i>
Lodging (<i>Maximum rate per person, excludes taxes and fees</i>)	\$75.10	\$88.70
Total Travel Allowance Per Day	\$114.50	\$130.80
Mileage	\$0.56 cents per mile	

VII. APPLICATION CONTENT & FORMAT

The submitted electronic application must be formatted to print on 8.5 x 11-inch paper with margins of 1 inch, except for the spreadsheets used in the budget template. Line spacing should be single-spaced. Use Calibri or Times New Roman font **only** no smaller than an 11-point font. All proposals must include the following (** indicates form posted with the RFA notice*).

- 1) **Application Checklist***: Summarizes the application components to be submitted.
- 2) **Application Face Sheet***: Requires electronic or scanned signature of authorized authority.
- 3) **Proposal Summary:** Provide a brief (3-5 paragraphs) description of the applicant's proposal to support the implementation of the Pyramid Model Pilot in the county.
- 4) **Overview of the Applicant's Organization, Target Population, and NC Pre-K Programs:**
Provide a 2-3-page introduction to the applicant's organization, including:
 - The organization's mission, history, and goals;
 - Qualifications, experience, and expertise of key personnel to be assigned to this initiative;
 - Organization's experience in the content area specified in the application, and;
 - Work samples or examples of similar or relevant efforts;
 - The organization's mission, history, goals, and work with the NC Pre-K program, including: the number of NC Pre-K classrooms and their locations (within either elementary schools or private centers) and the number and demographics of children served in the prior year, including their sex, race, those with special needs, and English Language Learners;
 - Where available, data on suspensions and expulsions rates for the prior year for NC Pre-K and kindergarten (including a definition of suspension and expulsion);
 - Data on which elementary schools NC Pre-K children attended after pre-k in the most recent year and the number of children going to each elementary school

from each pre-k classroom, as well as any changes expected to these dispersion patterns for the 2021/2022 or future school years;

- Experience implementing the Kindergarten Transition program (or infrastructure aligned with Every Student Achieves Act) including the extent to which data has been collected and summarized on children served and how data was transferred from NC Pre-K to kindergarten and information shared with kindergarten teachers as part of the Kindergarten Transition program;
- Experience implementing TS GOLD including teacher familiarity and inter-reliability ratings;
- A profile of the specific centers/schools proposed for the pilot, including the number and demographics of children served in the prior year and the rationale for choosing the centers/schools as aligned with the PM Fidelity Readiness Checklist (see Appendix E) – finalization of the selection of implementation and comparison sites will be based on the requirements of the evaluation and additional factors including the support of principals, teacher turnover, and concentration of NC Pre-K children;
- The organization's and LEA's past and/or current efforts with SED, the Pyramid Model, and using evidence-based practices generally to advance better outcomes for children;
- The organization's and LEA's past and/or current use of family-based SED interventions (including but not limited to those in Appendix B), which should include a description of what programs are being delivered and to whom;
- The organization's past and/or current trainings on cultural competency and racial equity;
- The organization's commitment to racial equity and demonstrated equitable policies for staff (e.g., provision of living wages, benefits to support physical and mental health of staff, policies to encourage staff diversity, equity, and inclusion) - where possible, include demographic data on racial makeup of staff.

5) **Implementation Capacity:**

Provide a 2-3-page narrative addressing the organization's willingness and capacity to participate in an intense program of training, technical assistance, and outreach/coordination activities required to implement the Pyramid Model to fidelity. Additionally, there will be an administrative/reporting function required as part of the pilot. Include the name, title, qualifications, and experience of key personnel (including head administrator and center director(s) to be assigned to the pilot and what each person will be responsible for. Provide data on the stability of the workforce at the proposed NC Pre-K center(s) and highlight any planned strategies to boost retention at those center(s). Describe the organization's readiness for the pilot including staff's current understanding of developmentally appropriate practices, procedures in place to address challenging behavior (both in crisis situations and in persistent problem behavior), and how the organization supports teachers in handling challenging behavior. Describe any current proposals/strategies for outreach to families to support them in

the social emotional development of their children, and/or demonstrate the capacity to collaborate with community partners to implement proposals/strategies.

- 6) **Partnerships Plan:** Include a 1-2-page description of the organization's plan to secure the support and commitment required from collaborative partners necessary for successful pilot implementation, including the NC Pre-K contract administrator, someone from the school district with the authority to make decisions about piloting the Pyramid Model in kindergarten, the district administrator who is responsible for implementing the Pyramid Model in his/her district, and the district person who is responsible for NC Early Learning Inventory (ELI) implementation. Include the names, titles, and organizations of the partners. Explain the role each partner will play in supporting the pilot at the site, including resources to be provided (e.g., data collecting, reporting, other). Attach copies of support letters from collaborative partners, such as Child Care Resource & Referral Agency (CCR&R) or Smart Start. At a minimum, a letter from the LEA superintendent or designee indicating support for the pilot is required (a list of specific assurances to be obtained will be provided). A commitment from the public school system that indicates a willingness to share demographic and performance data for children (with appropriate privacy protections) is also required in accordance with the DCDEE and DPI data sharing agreement.
- 7) **Line-Item Budget*, Detailed Budget Narrative, and FTE Sheet*:** Complete and submit proposed line-item budgets for each of the three following contract terms: September 2021 – August 2022, September 2022 – August 2023, and September 2023- August 2024 for no more than \$20,000 per year. Also, complete a proposed budget narrative that explains in detail all line items in the budget worksheet per the "DCDEE Line-Item Budget & Narrative Instructions." The FTE worksheet and budget template (see Appendix: H or Appendix: I) are also required as part of this RFA. Details on other anticipated expenses critical to the implementation of the pilot, together with reasonable justification for the proposed expenditures, should be highlighted for DCDEE's consideration.
- 8) **Sustainability Plan:** Include a 1-2-page description addressing how the applicant will plan and implement sustainable actions to supplement resources during and beyond the pilot period to ensure continuity and what support will be required from DCDEE to advance sustainability. Describe a plan that includes the types of support and resources to be targeted from both the applicant and community partners and a funds diversification plan which includes identification of specific sources and types of local, state, and federal funds, as well as foundation and corporate sources. Recent success at securing funding to implement/pilot evidence-based interventions (including SED interventions) to improve early education outcomes should be highlighted, including funding from both public and private sources. This plan should also include staff's

commitment to changes recommended by the fidelity coach, leadership's long-term willingness to commit to the Pyramid Model implementation and strategies.

VIII. SELECTION PROCESS

The following is a general description of the process for selecting applications for funding for this initiative. A selection committee chosen by DCDEE will review each application submitted. Upon review of each application the selection committee will assign a numerical rating based on the following:

- 1) **Proposal Summary** (Maximum of **10** points):
Response must reflect the applicant's understanding of and responsiveness to the Scope of Services described in Section III.
- 2) **Description of Target Population and Programs** (Maximum of **20** points):
Response must include the following information in accordance with the DCDEE and DPI data sharing agreement:
 - The number of children eligible for and attending NC Pre-K in the last two years and number expected for 2021.
 - Total number and location of NC Pre-K classrooms in both private centers and public schools, the number that have implemented the Pyramid Model, as well as the total number and demographics of children served in the prior two years.
 - The total number of kindergarten classrooms and location, including information on how many NC Pre-K children attended each one (if available).
 - The proposed pilot centers that are public schools versus private centers, with the number of total respective classrooms and students in each.
 - Absenteeism and suspension/expulsion data for NC Pre-K and kindergarten by classroom for the past two years (if available).
 - Turnover data for private centers and public schools for the past two years and projected turnover data for the next two years.
 - A clear rationale provided for the choice of the proposed pilot classrooms.
- 3) **Relevant Experience with the NC Pre-K Program** (Maximum of **20** points):
Response must reflect the applicant's history of experience with the implementation of the NC Pre-K program and the Kindergarten Transition program (or similar county programs aligned with the Every Student Succeeds Act). The level of experience with TS GOLD implementation, including teacher familiarity and inter-reliability ratings, are described. The participation in the Kindergarten Transition pilot or demonstration of necessary infrastructure (See Appendix E: Transition from Preschool to Kindergarten Benchmarks of Quality) is reflected. Past and/or present work with SED, the Pyramid

Model, and evidence-based practices is described. Applicants should also describe what family-based SED programs are currently being implemented in the county and for whom.

4) **Implementation Plan and Capacity** (Maximum of **20** points):

Response must reflect the applicant's willingness and capacity to successfully participate in implementing the pilot and assisting in its evaluation. Applicants must outline a clear process for selecting which sites/classrooms will participate in the pilot. Clear proposals are provided for direct (or indirect) outreach to families for the family-based intervention component of the pilot. The applicant identifies the key persons who will lead the pilot at the site, and their qualifications and responsibilities are appropriate to the requirements of the task.

5) **Partnership Plan** (Maximum of **15** points):

Response must reflect the applicant's approach to and evidence of the organization's ability to secure the level of commitment from key collaborative partners required to successfully implement the pilot. Support letters from collaborative partners with the intended commitment to the pilot are documented including a strong letter from the LEA superintendent, covering the specified needs from the school system and Child Care Resource & Referral Agency (CCR&R) or Smart Start. The lead point of contact is clearly identified for each partner.

6) **Line Item Budget*, Detailed Budget Narrative and FTE Sheet***: (Maximum of **5** points):

Budget must reflect efficient and effective use of financial resources. The proposal for utilizing DCDEE funding to support the pilot is well justified and follows all stipulations included in the budget worksheet and narrative instructions. The primary benefit being offered through this pilot is Pyramid Model Technical Assistance, training, and coaching and resources for family engagement components. DCDEE and DPI anticipate covering certain expenses that may be necessary to support participation such as professional development, substitute costs, additional classroom supplies. Applicants should describe what their budget requirements are to be able to participate in the pilot, including but not limited to:

- Supplemental funds to support centers in implementing the pilot
- Supplemental funds to support LEAs in implementing the pilot
- Supplemental funds to support NC Pre-K contract administrators
- Materials to implement family support component of the pilot.

7) **Sustainability Plan**: (Maximum of **10** Points):

Plans must reflect appropriate strategies to supplement resources during and/or beyond the pilot award period to ensure continuity. Plan identifies the types and sources of support and resources, including in-kind support and financial resources from

community, foundations, corporate, and local, state, and federal government sources. Examples are provided of recent success at securing financial support to implement evidence-based interventions.

Maximum Points: 100

Any attachments must further demonstrate the applicant's capacity to fulfill the requirements for this project as described. Attachments will not count against the applicant's page limitations. The selection committee will submit recommendations to DCDEE based on the selection process described. The Division will make a final selection and notify all applicants of that selection electronically **no later than 5:00 pm on July 30, 2021.**

IX. APPLICATION PROCUREMENT PROCESS

1. Written questions concerning the RFA specifications will be received until the date specified on the cover sheet of this RFA. A summary of all questions and answers will be posted to DCDEE's website (<http://ncchildcare.nc.gov/>) by **July 16, 2021**. DCDEE plans to host a Bidder's Conference in support of this RFA.
2. **An electronic submission** of the application must be received from each agency or organization. The submission must include an application face sheet with an electronic or scanned signature by an official authorized to bind the agency or organization in a legal contract.
3. All applications must be received by DCDEE via email not later than the date and time specified on the cover sheet of the RFA. **Paper copies or faxed applications will not be accepted.**
4. The date and time of application receipt will be documented by the date and time shown on the email submission received via DCDEE.PDGContracts.Unit.RFA@dhhs.nc.gov. Budgets and budget narratives are to be included as part of the application submitted.
5. At its option, the RFA evaluation team may request additional information from any or all applicants for clarification or to support the materials presented in any part of the application. However, agencies and organizations are cautioned that the evaluation team is not required to request clarification; therefore, all applications should be complete and reflect the most favorable terms available from the agency or organization.
6. Applications will be evaluated according to completeness, content, and applicant's documented experience with similar projects, apparent ability of the agencies or organization's staff and cost. The award of a grant to one agency and organization does not mean that the other applications lacked merit but that, all facts considered, the selected application was deemed to provide the best service to the State.

7. Agencies and organizations are cautioned that this is a request for applications, and the funding agency reserves the unqualified right to reject any and all applications when such rejections are deemed to be in the best interest of the funding agency.

8. Application Process Summary Dates

June 30, 2021	Request for Applications issued.
July 9, 2021	Interested applications submit optional Notice of Intent no later than 5pm
July 9, 2021	All questions due via email no later than 5 pm.
July 13, 2021	Virtual Bidder's Conference (Live Q&A Session)
July 16, 2021	Answers to emailed questions and Bidder's Conference posted to the DCDEE website no later than 5pm.
July 30, 2021	Applications must be received via email no later than 5 pm.
August 6, 2021	Successful applicant will be notified.
September 1, 2021	Contract start date.

X. General Information on Submitting Applications

1. Award or Rejection

All complete and timely submitted applications will be evaluated and awards will be made to the agencies or organizations whose combination of budget and service capabilities are deemed to be in the best interest of the funding agency. The funding agency reserves the unqualified right to reject any or all offers if determined to be in its best interest. The successful applicant will be notified by **August 06, 2021**.

2. Cost of Application Preparation

Any cost incurred by an agency or organization in preparing or submitting an application is the agency or organization's sole responsibility; the funding agency will not reimburse any agency or organization for any pre-award costs incurred.

3. Elaborate Applications

Elaborate applications in the form of brochures or other presentations beyond what is necessary to present a complete and effective application are not desired.

4. Oral Explanations

The funding agency will not be bound by oral explanations or instructions given at any time during the competitive process or after awarding the grant.

5. Reference to Other Data

Only information that is received in response to this RFA will be evaluated; reference to information previously submitted will not be considered.

6. Titles

Titles and headings in this RFA are for convenience only and shall have no binding force or effect.

7. Form of Application

Each application must be submitted utilizing the forms provided by DCDEE, and upon award, these forms will be incorporated into the funding agency's Performance Agreement (contract).

8. Exceptions

All applications are subject to the terms and conditions outlined herein. All responses will be controlled by such terms and conditions. The attachment of other terms and conditions by any agency or organization may be grounds for rejection of that agency or organization's application.

9. Advertising

In submitting its application, agencies and organizations agree not to use the results of the selection process as part of any news release or commercial advertising without prior written approval of DCDEE.

10. Right to Submitted Material

All responses, inquiries, or correspondence relating to or in reference to the RFA, and all other reports, charts, displays, schedules, exhibits, and other documentation submitted by the agency or organization will become the property of the funding agency when received.

11. Competitive Offer

Pursuant to the provision of N.C.G.S. 143-54, and under penalty of perjury, the signer of any application submitted in response to this RFA thereby certifies that this application has not been arrived at collusively or otherwise in violation of either Federal or North Carolina antitrust laws.

12. Agency and Organization's Representative

Each agency or organization shall submit with its application the name, address, and telephone number of the person(s) with authority to bind the agency or organization and answer questions regarding the application.

13. Subcontracting

Agencies and organizations may propose to subcontract portions of work provided that their applications clearly indicate the scope of the work to be subcontracted, and to whom.

14. Proprietary Information

Trade secrets or similar proprietary data which the agency or organization does not wish

disclosed to other than personnel involved in the evaluation will be kept confidential to the extent permitted by NCAC TO1: 05B.1501 and G.S. 132-1.3 if identified as follows: Each page shall be identified in boldface at the top and bottom as "CONFIDENTIAL." Any section of the application that is to remain confidential shall also be so marked in boldface on the title page of that section.

15. Participation Encouraged

Pursuant to Article 3 and 3C, Chapter 143 of the North Carolina General Statutes and Executive Order No. 77, the funding agency invites and encourages participation in this RFA by businesses owned by minorities, women and the disabled including utilization as subcontractor(s) to perform functions under this Request for Applications.

16. Gifts Ban

N.C.G.S. 133-32 and Executive Order 24 prohibit the offer to or acceptance by any State Employee of any gift from anyone with a contract with the State, or from any person seeking to do business with the State. By execution of any response to this request, agencies and organizations attest, for the entire organization and its employees or agents, that no such gift has been offered, accepted, or promised by any employees of the organization.

17. Contract/Funds Disbursement

DCDEE will issue a contract to the recipients of the grant that will include their application. Expenditures may begin upon receipt of a fully executed contract and not before that point. To receive compensation, following contract submission and agreement, the selected applicants must submit a monthly reimbursement request to the Division for all expenses incurred.

18. Audit

Please be advised that successful applicants may be required to have an audit in accordance with N.C.G.S. 143C-6-22 and N.C.G.S. 143C-6-23 as applicable to the agency's status.

There are 3 reporting levels which are determined by the total direct grant receipts from all State agencies in the entity's fiscal year:

Level 1: Less than \$25,000

Level 2: At least \$25,000 but less than \$500,000

Level 3: \$500,000 or more. Level 3 grantees are required to submit a "Yellow Book" audit done by a CPA.

Only Level 3 grantees may include audit expenses on the budget. Audit expenses should be prorated based on the ratio of the grant to the total pass-through funds received by the entity.

19. Additional Documentation to Include with Application

All applicants are required to include documentation of their tax identification number. Those applicants which are private nonprofit agencies are to include a copy of an IRS determination letter regarding the agency's 501(c)(3) tax-exempt status. (This letter normally includes the agency's tax identification number, so it would also satisfy that documentation requirement.)

20. Federal Certifications

Agencies or organizations receiving federal funds are required to execute Federal certifications regarding non-discrimination, Drug-Free Workplace, Environmental Tobacco Smoke, Debarment, Lobbying, and Lobbying Activities.

21. System for Award Management Database (SAM)

All grantees receiving federal funds must be actively registered in the federal government's System for Award Management (SAM) database, or be willing to complete the registration process in conjunction with the award (see www.sam.gov). To maintain an active SAM record, the record must be updated no less than annually.

22. Additional Documentation Prior to Contract Execution

Contracts will require additional documentation prior to contract execution. After the award announcement, agencies will be contacted about providing the following documentation:

- a. A completed and signed letter from the agency's Board President/Chairperson identifying individuals authorized to sign contracts.
- b. A completed and signed letter from the agency's Board President/Chairperson identifying individuals authorized to sign expenditure reports and individuals authorized to negotiate the terms of the contract.
- c. Documentation of the agency's DUNS number. Documentation consists of a copy of communication (such as a letter or email correspondence) from Dun & Bradstreet (D&B) which indicates the agency or organization's legal name, address, and DUNS number. In lieu of a document from D&B, a copy of the agency or organization's SAM record is acceptable.
- d. If your agency does not have a DUNS number, please use the D&B online registration (<http://fedgov.dnb.com/webform>) to receive one free of charge. (DUNS is the acronym for the Data Universal Numbering System developed and regulated by D&B.)

- e. Contracts with private non-profit agencies require additional documentation prior to contract execution. After the award announcement, private non-profit agencies will be contacted about providing the following documentation:
 - i. A completed, signed, and notarized statement which includes the agency's Conflict of Interest Policy.
 - ii. A completed, signed, and notarized page certifying that the agency has no overdue tax debts.
- f. All grantees receiving funds through the State of North Carolina are required to execute Contractor Certifications Required by North Carolina Law. Contractor Certifications should **NOT** be generated, signed or returned with application.

Note: At the start of each calendar year, all agencies with current DCDEE contracts are required to update their contract documentation. These agencies will be contacted a few weeks prior to the due date and will be provided the necessary forms and instructions.

23. Registration with Secretary of State

Private non-profit applicants must also be registered with the North Carolina Secretary of State to do business in North Carolina or be willing to complete the registration process in conjunction with the execution of the contract documents. (See www.secretary.state.nc.us/corporations.)

24. Federal Funding Accountability and Transparency Act (FFATA) Data Reporting Requirement

The Contractor shall complete and submit to the Division, the Federal Funding Accountability and Transparency Act (FFATA) Data Reporting Requirement form within 10 State Business Days when awarded \$25,000 or more in federal funds.

25. Salary Limitation

The Consolidated Appropriations Act, 2018, (Division H, Title II, Sec. 202), limits the salary amount that may be awarded and charged to ACF grants and cooperative agreements. Award funds issued under this announcement may not be used to pay the salary of an individual at a rate in excess of Executive Level II. The Executive Level II salary of the "Rates of Pay for the Executive Schedule" is \$189,600. This amount reflects an individual's base salary exclusive of fringe benefits and any income that an individual may be permitted to earn outside of the duties of the applicant organization. This salary limitation also applies to subawards and subcontracts under an ACF grant or cooperative agreement.

XI. APPLICATION CHECKLIST

The following items must be included in the application. Please assemble the application in the following order in the format identified in Section VI on page 10:

Private Centers		Public Schools	
Application Checklist – Item 1	<input type="checkbox"/>	Application Checklist – Item 1	<input type="checkbox"/>
Application Face Sheet – Items 2	<input type="checkbox"/>	Application Face Sheet – Items 2	<input type="checkbox"/>
Proposal Summary/Design – Item 3	<input type="checkbox"/>	Proposal Summary/Design – Item 3	<input type="checkbox"/>
List of Subcontractors – Item 4	<input type="checkbox"/>	List of Subcontractors – Item 4	<input type="checkbox"/>
Line-Item Budget & FTE Worksheet – Item 6 (Appendix H)	<input type="checkbox"/>	Line-Item Budget & FTE Worksheet – Item 5 (Appendix I)	<input type="checkbox"/>
Indirect Cost Rate Approval Letter (if applicable)- Item 7	<input type="checkbox"/>	Indirect Cost Rate Approval Letter (if applicable)- Item 7	<input type="checkbox"/>
Letters of Commitment or Statements of Support – Item 8	<input type="checkbox"/>	Letters of Commitment or Statements of Support – Item 8	<input type="checkbox"/>
PMFP Child Care Center Readiness Rubric– Item 9	<input type="checkbox"/>	N/a	
Transition from Preschool to Kindergarten Benchmarks of Quality – Item 10	<input type="checkbox"/>	Transition from Preschool to Kindergarten Benchmarks of Quality – Item 10	<input type="checkbox"/>
IRS Tax Status Documentation – Item 11 a. IRS letter documenting your organization’s tax identification number. OR b. IRS determination letter regarding your organization’s 501(c)(3) tax exempt status for private nonprofits.	<input type="checkbox"/>	IRS Tax Status Documentation – Item 11 a. IRS letter documenting your organization’s tax identification number. OR b. IRS determination letter regarding your organization’s 501(c)(3) tax exempt status for private nonprofits.	<input type="checkbox"/>