

District of Columbia Office of the State Superintendent of Education and Hurley & Associates

Scope of Work

Preschool Development Grant B-5 Needs Assessment

BACKGROUND

The Office of the State Superintendent of Education (OSSE) is the state education agency for the District of Columbia and is charged with raising the quality of education for all DC residents. OSSE's Division of Early Learning (DEL) provides leadership and coordination to ensure that all District of Columbia children, from birth to kindergarten entrance, have access to high quality early childhood development programs and are well prepared for school. In September 2024, OSSE received a three-year, federal Preschool Development Grant, Birth to Five (PDG B-5) implementation grant from the U.S. Department of Health and Human Services. PDG B-5 supports states and territories in their efforts to enhance early childhood systems and improve children's access to high-quality early care and education. OSSE's PDG B-5 implementation grant focuses on four priority areas:

- Advancing inclusion, mental health and social-emotional development of children in high-quality early learning programs across the B-5 mixed delivery system, particularly children with disabilities or developmental delays and those who face other barriers to accessing and fully participating in quality early learning programs;
- Advancing education, compensation and well-being of early childhood educators;
- Assessing and enhancing the District's approach to measuring, reporting and supporting continuous improvement in the quality of early care and education programs; and
- Enhancing OSSE capacity to support early care and education programs, early educators and families through communications, technical assistance and data analysis.

Hurley and Associates (H&A) is a dynamic, multi-faceted consulting firm dedicated to providing a spectrum of education services to private and non-profit organizations and government agencies at the local, state and federal levels. H&A is composed of a cadre of expert educators and staff with demonstrated experience in the following areas: program evaluation, professional development of teachers and staff, monitoring and compliance, project management, subject matter expertise and technical assistance. In fiscal year 2024, OSSE, through a competitive grant process, awarded H&A three program areas within the Building and Sustaining Quality Early Care and Education (BSQECE) grant to provide ongoing, comprehensive support and implementation of an integrated system of supports for child care programs, early educators and families, comprising four interconnected program areas: (1) Capital Quality, the District's quality rating and improvement system (QRIS); (2) Professional development for the early care and education workforce; and (3) the DC Shared Services Business Alliance (DC SSBA), which provides shared services and business support and capacity building for child development homes and small/independent centers.

As part of the PDG B-5 grant activities, OSSE/DEL, through H&A, will update existing needs assessments of the District's early care and education landscape.

PURPOSE

The mission of OSSE/DEL is to support DC children and families to access high-quality early childhood program and start school prepared to thrive. To inform these efforts, including PDG B-5 grant activities, OSSE/DEL, and the District's early learning stakeholders, need a clear and shared understanding of the current state of the District's early learning landscape; the characteristics and needs of young children and their families in the District; the programs and services available to them; and the strengths, weaknesses, and gaps in those programs and services relative to child and family needs. To this end, OSSE/DEL and H&A seek to commission a needs assessment of the District's early childhood landscape, as described in more detail below, in support of the BSQECE grant work.

SCOPE

OSSE/DEL and H&A are seeking a contractor to synthesize, update and build on existing needs assessments of the District's early learning landscape in order to inform the District's PDG B-5 grant activities, BSQECE implementation, and broader early childhood system building efforts. A wealth of research, studies and reports on the current state and needs of the District's children, families, early educators and early childhood programs already exists, and OSSE has used these results to inform the PDG B-5 grant goals and activities, as well as other early learning programs and policies. The goal of this needs assessment is not to duplicate existing research and needs assessments, but rather to compile and synthesize them in order to build a common, shared fact base on the characteristics and needs of the District's young children and families; the current state of the District's early learning landscape, policies and programs; and the strengths, weaknesses and gaps in existing services as relates to the needs of children and families. In addition, the needs assessment will include additional, new research and stakeholder engagement to deepen OSSE's, H&A's and key stakeholders' understanding of a topic identified as a need and growth area for the District's early learning system by past needs assessment: the need to improve access to inclusive, quality early learning for children with disabilities, developmental delay and/or mental, behavioral and other health needs, as well as supports for educators and early learning programs to implement inclusive early learning programs that support the mental health, social-emotional development and learning of all children, including those with disabilities, developmental delays and/or mental, behavioral and other health needs.

The study will address current landscape and needs across the District's mixed delivery B-5 early learning system, including District of Columbia Public Schools (DCPS), public charter schools and licensed child development homes and centers. This seven-month contractual opportunity is scheduled to begin March 1, 2025, and conclude no later than Sept. 30, 2025.

The secured vendor will complete two separate needs assessment components: (I) Review and synthesis of existing needs assessments and (II) In-depth qualitative and quantitative information gathering related to barriers to access to quality, inclusive early learning opportunities for children with disabilities, developmental delays and/or mental, behavioral and other health needs as well as supports needed for families, early educators, schools and child development facilities to support inclusion and success of this population of children in early childhood programs across the mixed delivery system.

- (I) **Review and synthesis of existing needs assessments:** The vendor will identify and review needs assessments of the District's early learning landscape and other research conducted over the past five years; update data points (as applicable) to reflect the most recent

available data; and synthesize findings to generate an updated and comprehensive fact base of the current state and needs of the District’s children, families, and early childhood system, including strengths, weaknesses, gaps and opportunities. This review and synthesis will incorporate at least the following previously published reports:

1. [Initial PDG B-5 Needs Assessment](#) (OSSE, 2019)
2. QIN Community Needs Assessment (Child Trends, [2019](#); updated 2023)
3. Reports published by the Urban Institute as part of the [DC Child Care Policy Research Partnership](#) (2019-present)
4. Three reports published by the Low Income Investment Fund and OpenFields on the [Ecosystem of Child Care Infrastructure in Washington, DC](#) (LIIF, 2024)
5. Assessing Child Care Access: Measuring Supply, Demand, Quality and Shortages in the District of Columbia ([Bainum Family Foundation and Reinvestment Fund](#), 2024)
6. Any additional relevant needs assessments or reports identified by the vendor

(II) In-depth qualitative and quantitative information gathering related to barriers to quality, inclusive early learning for children with disabilities, developmental delays and mental, behavioral or other health needs will seek to answer the following questions:

1. What is the population of children, B-5, in the District of Columbia with disabilities, developmental delay, or mental, behavioral and health needs that affect their ability to access and fully participate in quality early learning programs? What are the characteristics of these children and their families, including:
 - i. Demographic characteristics (e.g. race, ethnicity, age)
 - ii. Disability or health/mental health diagnoses and needs
 - iii. Family Income
 - iv. Eligibility for or participation in child care subsidy, Head Start, IDEA Part C or B, or other programs to support access to quality early learning
 - v. Engagement with child welfare system
 - vi. Geographic location
2. What services currently exist to serve young children with disabilities, developmental delays or mental, behavioral or health needs and their families, including:
 - i. Capacity of DCPS, charter schools and DCPS to serve children in general or specialized early care and education settings
 - ii. Related services available to support the developmental, health and mental health needs of children and their families, including but not limited to:
 1. Early Intervention Services
 2. Mental Health Consultation
 3. Clinical Behavioral Health Services
 4. Specialized medical, behavioral or therapeutic services for children with specific diagnoses or conditions (e.g. autism, vision or hearing impairment)
 - iii. Services and initiatives (including professional development) to build the capacity of early childhood educators, related service professionals and program leaders across the mixed delivery system to provide high-quality, inclusive learning environments and experiences that support the development of children with disabilities, developmental delays or mental, behavioral and other health needs.
3. What is the adequacy, quality and effectiveness of existing services in meeting the needs of children and their families? Where are there gaps in supply, quality or program

- effectiveness that need to be addressed?
4. What barriers do families of children with disabilities, developmental delays or mental, behavioral or health needs encounter in accessing quality, inclusive early learning programs or related services they need?
 5. What “pain points” or challenges do B-5 educators and ECE programs across the mixed delivery system experience in serving children with disabilities, developmental delays or mental, behavioral or health needs encounter in accessing quality, inclusive early learning programs?
 6. What systemic factors or policies, at the local educational agency (LEA), District-wide or federal level, support or create barriers to access to inclusive, quality early learning for children with disabilities, developmental delays or mental, behavioral and other health needs?
 7. What initiatives are currently underway in the District to build capacity or enhance access to quality, inclusive early learning environments for children with disabilities, developmental delays; or mental, behavioral and other health needs and their families? What are the results to date of these initiatives?
 8. Are there effective or promising practices in other jurisdictions to address gaps, barriers or structural factors identified in the District?
 9. What actionable steps, at a programmatic, policy and system level, are needed to improve access and outcomes for children with disabilities, developmental delays or mental, behavioral and other health needs and their families across the B-5 mixed delivery system?

Over the course of seven months, the secured vendor will: (1) determine the methodology for conducting the analysis; (2) collect and analyze data from existing sources to inform the planned approach; (3) develop interview and focus group instruments; (4) analyze findings; and (5) develop required reports described below. The vendor will work in partnership with OSSE/DEL to ensure that this needs assessment supports the District’s goals for the PDG-B-5 grant.

The final deliverables for the project will comprise three separate reports: (1) an updated fact base/synthesis of data and findings from existing needs assessments; (2) a detailed technical report to OSSE and H&A on the conduct, findings and implications of the additional qualitative and quantitative information gathering related to the barriers to access to inclusive, quality early learning for young children with disabilities, developmental delays and mental, behavior and other health needs; and (3) a high-level summary of findings from the additional qualitative and quantitative information gathering appropriate to a broader stakeholder audience. Reports may be provided in either Microsoft Word or PowerPoint format, as agreed to by the vendor, OSSE and H&A. Reports shall include graphic presentations of key data points, and the vendor shall provide to OSSE and H&A both the raw data files and reusable graphic files for any data visualization graphics included in the reports. The deliverables and timeline can be found below in Table 2.

EVALUATION CRITERIA

Proposals will be reviewed and scored out of 100 points, as outlined below in Table 1. Proposals should describe the methodology and plans that the vendor will use to address the tasks below for:

- Scanning and synthesizing existing needs assessments;
- Collecting and analyzing currently existing public or administrative data related to children with disabilities, developmental delays and mental, behavioral or other health needs in the

- District and their families;
- Conducting key informant interviews and focus groups;
- Reviewing statutes, regulations, policy and program guidance, including any specific statutes, regulations, policy and program guidance the vendor identifies as central to this project;
- Any other information collection or stakeholder engagement methods proposed by the vendor;
- Drafting and revising reports.

Proposals shall include:

- Draft budget;
- Timeline details and any modifications to the timeline proposed below; and
- Staffing for this project, including the team, roles and qualifications (with resumes).

Table 1: Evaluation Criteria

Evaluation Criteria	Points
Prior Experience	20
Project Budget	10
Qualifications of Proposed Staff	30
Quality of Planned Approach	40
Total	100

TASKS

At a minimum, the planned approach must include how the vendor will complete the following tasks:

1. Synthesize and update existing landscape assessments of the District’s young children ages B-5, their families and the early learning ecosystem.
 - a. Conduct a scan to identify relevant existing needs assessments
 - b. Review needs assessments and identify key findings and themes
 - c. Assess the extent to which existing reports present the most recent available data on children, families and early learning programs in the District; to the extent that more recent data is available, updated key data points using publicly available (e.g. Census) or administrative (e.g. OSSE licensing) data as applicable
2. Develop a report that presents updated data and synthesizes key themes from existing needs assessments to present a current fact base on the state of the District’s early learning system, children and families that includes:
 - o The number and characteristics of the District’s population of young children B-5 and their families, including race, ethnicity, family income, geographic distribution and percentage of children identified with disabilities or developmental delays
 - o Needs of families and children identified in prior research and needs assessments
 - o The landscape of early childhood care and education programs operating in the District, including the supply of early care and education slots/seats, by ages served and location, across the three sectors of DCPS, public charter schools and child development facilities, as well as other related services and systems

- o supporting young children and families in the District
 - o Strengths, weaknesses, gaps and opportunities in the District’s early learning landscape, as identified by prior needs assessments
 - o Additional key findings from prior research or needs assessments that are important for informing efforts to improve early learning system functioning and outcomes for children and families, particularly those furthest from opportunity
3. Design and carry out a mixed methods research and stakeholder engagement approach to collect additional qualitative and quantitative information related to barriers to quality, inclusive early learning experiences for children with disabilities, developmental delays and/or mental, behavioral or other health needs. This approach must include, at a minimum, the vendor’s proposed approach to:
 - a. Collect, review and analyze of relevant publicly available and administrative data
 - b. Conduct key informant interviews with stakeholders knowledgeable about the District’s early learning system and the experiences of children, families, educators and early childhood programs
 - c. Conduct focus groups with stakeholders engaged in the District’s early learning system, including, at a minimum, parents/guardians/caretakers of children B-5 with disabilities, developmental delays and mental, behavioral or other health needs and B-5 early educators
 - d. Review District and, as relevant, federal statutes, regulations, policies and program guidance that set requirements for or affect delivery of early care and education and related services for children with disabilities, developmental delays and mental, behavioral or other health needs
 - e. Carry out additional information collection or stakeholder engagement methods identified by the vendor as necessary and likely to provide insights that inform project research questions
 - o Ensure that all information collection and stakeholder engagement activities solicit input from stakeholders that reflect the diversity of the District’s young children, families, early educators and early childhood sector, including culturally and linguistically diverse children and families and early learning programs representing all sectors of the B-5 mixed delivery system (DCPS, public charter schools and licensed child development homes and centers).
 - o The vendor will provide reports to OSSE and H&A on the findings of the qualitative and quantitative information gathering
 6. Develop reports and recommendations based on the findings of the mixed methods research and stakeholder engagement, including:
 - o A detailed report to OSSE and H&A presenting the methodology, detailed findings of information collection activities, and any implications for OSSE, H&A or other District early childhood programs and stakeholders
 - o A high-level summary of key findings designed to be shared with a broad audience of external stakeholders
 7. Communicate and coordinate project deliverables
 - o Participate in (virtual) bi-weekly meetings with OSSE/DEL and H&A staff to discuss progress, data collected, research results, draft narratives and discuss comments and modifications; and
 - o Communication as needed with other partners.

DELIVERABLE TIMELINE

Table 2 below includes an anticipated deliverable timeline; prospective vendors are welcome to propose alternative timelines if they believe doing so would better achieve the project’s goals outlined above. Prospective vendors who do not believe it is possible to complete the scope of work as articulated within the timeline and budget provided are still encouraged to submit proposals that offer alternative approaches to achieving the overall goals of the project, as outlined above, with an adapted scope to fit within the timeline and budget available.

Table 2: Deliverable Timeline

Deliverables	Format/Method of Delivery	Due Date
Facilitate a kick-off meeting to review the scope of work including key deliverables and data collection methods.	Virtual meeting	Within 2 weeks of the contract start
Draft plans for the following tasks: scan, review and synthesis of existing needs assessments; development and implementation of mixed methods research and stakeholder engagement project.	Virtual meeting	At kick-off meeting
Submit final project workplan, including detailed research plan.	Electronic document	Within 2 weeks of kick-off meeting
Submit the proposed list of key informants to interview.	Electronic document	Within 2 weeks of kick-off meeting
Participate in bi-weekly meetings to discuss progress, analysis of existing surveys, data collected, research results, draft narratives and discuss comments and modifications.	Virtual meeting	Bi-weekly for duration of project
Submit plan for conduct of stakeholder focus groups, including proposed questions (and any other data collection methodologies if applicable)	Electronic document	Within 4 weeks of the kick-off meeting Receive feedback on draft engagement within 1 week of receipt
Submit final interview list.	Electronic document	Within 4 weeks of the kick-off meeting
Finalize plans for conduct of stakeholder focus groups and any other data collection methodologies.	Electronic document	Week 6
Analyze existing reports and data.	Included in electronic final report	Between week 1 and 8

Deliverables	Format/Method of Delivery	Due Date
Conduct focus groups.	Electronic document summarizing methods and final sample size	Between weeks 8 and 14
Conduct interviews.	Summary of key themes from interviews provided in bi-weekly meetings	Between weeks 2 and 14
Submit preliminary findings of qualitative and quantitative research and stakeholder engagement to OSSE/H&A.	Electronic document	Week 16
Submit all draft reports and communications collateral for review and feedback.	Electronic document	By week 20 Receive feedback on report within 2 weeks of receipt
Submit final reports, incorporating feedback.	Electronic document	Week 26
Provide access to raw data and files presenting any data visualization graphics.	Excel or CSV file	Week 26

ANTICIPATED BUDGET

OSSE and H&A anticipate proposals in the range of \$100,000 to \$250,000. Proposals with budgets exceeding \$300,000 will not be considered. OSSE and H&A reserve the right to request modifications to a prospective vendor’s proposed budget prior to confirming selection of a vendor.

SUBMISSION REQUIREMENTS

- A project narrative that includes how the vendor will address and meet the requirements articulated in the governing scope of work. This narrative should include key staff and their roles on the project. The narrative should not exceed 30 single-spaced pages, using 11-point font.
- Resumes of all key staff and/or consultants must be included.
- A budget and budget narrative describing how funds will be allocated for this work. The budget narrative must clearly articulate how all costs were determined.
- OSSE/DEL and H&A anticipate that all meetings and presentations for this project will be conducted using virtual modalities and that no travel will be required of the vendor for this project.
- All questions regarding the opportunity should be sent to pparker@erhurleyassoc.com.
- All submissions must be sent electronically to pparker@erhurleyassoc.com and must be received by **Feb. 14, 2025 at 5 p.m.**