South Carolina Department of Education
R372A200048

Project Title: South Carolina Early Learning Extension (SCELE)

Project Description: The South Carolina Department of Education (SCDE) requests a State Longitudinal Data Systems (SLDS) grant under the infrastructure priority for the *South Carolina Early Learning Extension (SCELE)*, a four-year project to extend its current data collection, storage, and reporting process to include early childhood (EC) education. Almost 300,000 children under the age of five live in South Carolina (SC), and almost half of these children are considered at-risk (Kids Count, 2019). Currently no comprehensive data collection and reporting system is in place so stakeholders can determine the effectiveness of existing EC programs. SC welcomes the opportunity to develop the infrastructure to help stakeholders learn more about how to best address the needs of this vulnerable population.

The goal of *SCELE* is to extend SC' current SLDS to incorporate EC programs and enable access to data that can inform stakeholders about the benefits of these programs. To accomplish this goal, the SCDE is partnering with SC First Steps to School Readiness (First Steps), the Office of Revenue and Fiscal Affairs (RFA), and the SC Department of Social Services (DSS) around five outcomes designed to inform our efforts to improve education in critical areas:

1. Data governance structure for early childhood data,
2. An aligned pre–K to 12 data pipeline,
3. Increased availability of early childhood data,
4. Accurate project documentation, and a
5. Data Portal accessible to stakeholders and the public.

Activities include extending the Student Unique Numbering System (SUNS) to include children age 0-5 years, a feasibility study to determine the best method of assigning the SUNS numbers, and the specific data elements that the partners will share. Partners and Stakeholders will work collaboratively to develop a data governance structure, policies, and procedures. SCELE will also create the infrastructure to collect data from each partner, validate it, and then convert it to the Common Education Data Standards (CEDS) so that it will feed into the current data system.

In addition to the SCELE partners, South Carolina's Head Start grantees will participate as collaborators and potential data sharing partners during SCELE. All project processes and procedures will be carefully documented and made available to help the SCELE team onboard additional partners. Throughout SCELE, other potential partners will be identified and when possible, brought into SCELE following the protocols outlined in the project's documentation. The state's Early Childhood Advisory Council will take a lead role in the data governance development.

SCELE will allow the SCDE, partnering agencies, and other stakeholders a more comprehensive picture of how effective EC programs are at addressing the needs of the children they serve. The SCDE is also interested in participating in the US Department of Education's School Level Poverty Project. The infrastructure that will be built, the data that will be shared, and the reports generated will collectively inform stakeholders from parents to classroom teachers to policymakers. The outcomes of SCELE will provide both an opportunity to inform and to reform.