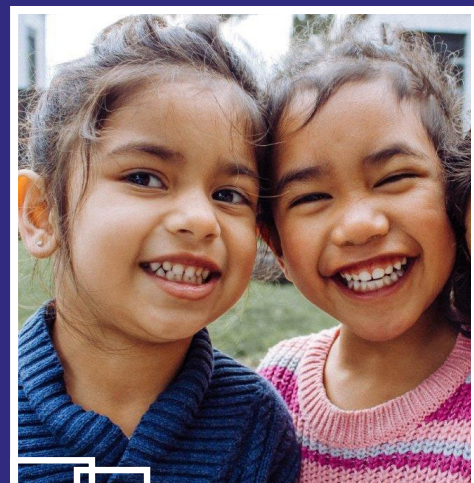


NEW MEXICO EARLY CHILDHOOD NEEDS ASSESSMENT

PRESCHOOL DEVELOPMENT GRANT BIRTH - FIVE



In 2019, the State of New Mexico received a 1-year, \$5.4 million planning federal Preschool Development Grant Birth-5 (PDG B-5) which is being led by the NM PDG B-5 State Leadership Team including the Governor's Office, the Children, Youth, and Families Department (CYFD), the Public Education Department (PED), and the Department of Health (DOH). To generate ideas for a Statewide Early Learning Strategic Plan, the PDG B-5 grant funded a comprehensive statewide Needs Assessment. Through a competitive process, the New Mexico Early Childhood Development Partnership was selected to assist the NM PDG B-5 State Leadership Team in the execution of the Statewide Early Childhood Needs Assessment and Strategic Plan for New Mexico. Below is a summary of the Needs Assessment. Developing the 2019 Early Childhood Needs Assessment included the following:

- 1,337 people directly engaged through community conversations and interviews
- 1,290 responses to workforce survey
- 819 responses to family survey
- 27 New Mexico plans and other analyses reviewed
- 72 county indicators analyzed

“Early childhood is more than programs. It has to be focused on **building families.**”

The themes for New Mexico's 2019 Needs Assessment were developed through deep community engagement and listening.



MAJOR THEMES

These are the strengths reported by stakeholders in the Early Learning System.

- **Childcare Subsidies** - stakeholders frequently expressed the sentiment that childcare subsidies made it possible for families to pay for care while they work and that this is an important income stream for community early childhood centers.
- **Early Intervention Services** - early childhood professionals specifically mentioned that having early interventionists working in centers was working very well.
- **NM PreK** - the growing number of NM PreK slots and the increased funding in 2019 were noted as strengths in the early childhood system.
- **Home Visiting Training and Professional Development** - professional development including reflective practice and support for home visitors were noted as strong, and often suggested for other professionals in early childhood.
- **Local Coalitions** - some communities have strong local coalitions providing valuable coordination and alignment for local programs.
- **Mixed-Delivery** - especially in rural communities, community based early childhood centers were noted as important businesses and assets for communities.

These are the areas of need reported by stakeholders in the Early Learning System.

- **More Quality and Access** - New Mexico can and should improve early childhood program quality and access. This theme ran across all geographies, socio-economic categories, political parties, backgrounds, languages, abilities, and other groupings.
- **Coordination and Alignment Across Programs** - The need for coordination and alignment across programs at every level was often raised. The desire from stakeholders is to truly integrate New Mexico's early childhood system as a continuum of support for children and families. This includes alignment with health systems, schools and economic development.
- **Better Data** - More consistent and connected data is needed to better inform the integration of health, education and social service program activities and outcomes.
- **Local Determination** - In part as an answer to how greater coordination and alignment could occur, stakeholders consistently expressed a strong desire for greater local voice and determination, including the need for flexibility to address local cultures and conditions.
- **Strengthen and Support the Workforce** - Through every topic and every conversation, ran the theme of needing to better retain, develop, support, and recruit early childhood professionals.
- **Improved Funding and Resources** - Funding consistency and predictability was most often raised, followed by the need to better integrate and use federal funding. Vulnerable populations have greater basic needs, such as multi-language information and forms, plus transportation and other supports to enable access to early childhood programs.

- **Increased Awareness and Communication** - This includes educating the public on the benefits and return on investment from early childhood, promoting awareness for families regarding programs and available supports, and providing more and better communication to stakeholders, including in other languages.
- **Increased Family Involvement** - Families must be at the center of any work to build and improve New Mexico’s early childhood system.
- **Developmentally Appropriate Programs** - Ensuring a strong social-emotional foundation for early childhood programs was frequently raised. This concern often included discussion of a relationships-based approach.
- **Improved Transitions** - The need for supported transitions across early childhood was widely identified. This includes transitions for children moving between programs, into schools, and better support for families whose children have special needs and different abilities.
- **Increase Inclusive Practices** - Serve all children in all early learning programs in inclusive environments without segregating or removing children, this includes children with disabilities, special health care needs, and behavioral challenges.
- **Strengths Based Approach** - Stakeholders expressed a clear desire for New Mexico to embrace a ‘strengths based approach,’ with customer service and care that reflects a belief that children and families are capable, resilient and not the products of decisions or circumstances.
- **Prioritize Child and Family Well-Being** - The well-being of children and families, and a multi-generational approach, was often cited as integral to improved outcomes from early childhood programs, especially given that New Mexico is again last in the nation in child well-being according to the 2019 Kids’ Count Data.

NATIVE AMERICAN PERSPECTIVES ON MAJOR THEMES

Some of the overall findings from tribal communities include:

- The need to address **improvement of existing early childhood infrastructure** and building of new classrooms, centers, and schools to accommodate an increase in programming across tribal communities, and rural communities.
- Strong support for the **integration of education and health systems** across the state’s infrastructure, which many noted is consistent with the ways in which tribal communities view well-being for our youth and families.
- A desire to see **greater trust in tribal communities to implement programming and curriculum** without state or federal interference and concerns about the potential for language and cultural loss with expansion of early childhood programs across the state.
- Several participants in our study interpreted the primary ideological focus on English language programming in the Pre-K curriculums, and inability to implement early childhood programming as independent Nations as **structural racism**, as it appears to assume that acquisition of English has greater advantages than early learning in Native languages.

“This is how we think about early childhood, as **language, learning, and wellness all inter-related.**”



FOCUS AREA **EQUITABLE ACCESS**

- Embrace multi-cultural multi-lingual, multi-generational programs
- More awareness of programs and available support
- Stigma impacts families
- More inclusive settings
- Physical infrastructure is lacking
- Scarcity of infant and toddler care
- Support for home-based care
- Lack of available transportation
- Address issues around food insecurity



FOCUS AREA **WORKFORCE**

- Increase compensation
- Value experience and compensate accordingly
- Align professional development
- Trauma informed training
- Supported pathways
- Improve equity in access to education and training



FOCUS AREA **FUNDING**

- Better understand reimbursements and costs
- Leverage federal funding
- Consistent and streamlined funding access
- Blend and braid funding streams
- Flexible resources to support local coordination and collaboration
- Funding to construct, repair and enhance capital assets
- Funding and coordination to solve a variety of systemic issues



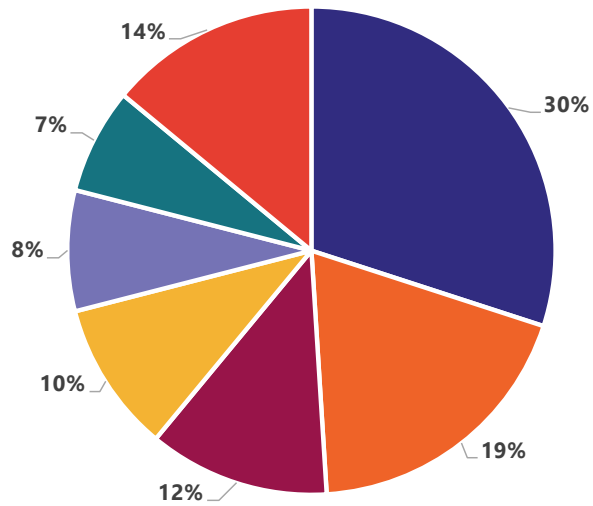
FOCUS AREA **GOVERNANCE**

- Setting a new tone
- Collaborative leadership
- Local determination
- Continual process feedback and improvement
- Assets based approach
- Improved communication
- Coordination and alignment across programs
- Strengthen family leadership and recognize families as decision makers and policy advisors

“It’s not all about money. We’re still dealing with issues of **engagement** (from families) and **coordination** (in programs).”

FAMILY SURVEY

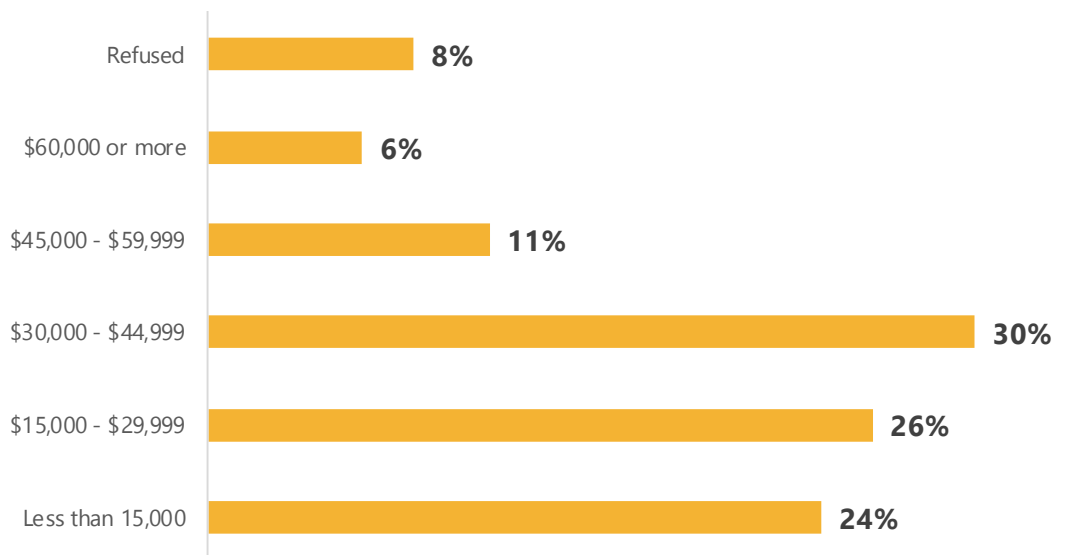
WHEN ASKED TO IDENTIFY THE GREATEST AREA OF NEED



- Affordable infant or toddler care
- Pre-K programming
- Improving the connection between the education and health infrastructures
- Giving local communities more control
- Expanding home visiting programs
- Addressing workforce development
- Specified another answer, did not know, or did not answer

WORKFORCE SURVEY

WHEN ASKED TO PROVIDE THEIR ANNUAL SALARY SPECIFIC TO THEIR JOB IN EARLY CHILDHOOD WE FIND THAT **50% OF THE SAMPLE REPORTED THAT THEY MAKE LESS THAN \$30,000 ANNUALLY.**



EARLY CHILDHOOD STRATEGIC PLAN

ANTICIPATED BY EARLY 2020

The NM PDG B-5 State Leadership Team, designed the process for the New Mexico Birth to 5 Strategic Planning, to ensure stakeholder involvement at all levels. Through community and statewide meetings, and forums, stakeholders will hear, analyze and react to a synthesis of the input, research and data gathered during the New Mexico Statewide Birth - 5 Needs Assessment. Stakeholders will be asked to provide input for the Statewide Strategic Plan with the understanding that continued stakeholder engagement will result in a better-informed plan with greater likelihood of success.

“Don’t be afraid to make changes for the
success of children.”



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