

Fiscal Year 2023-24 Information Technology Request

Early Childhood Universal Preschool

SHORT PROJECT DESCRIPTION

The Department of Early Childhood (DEC) is requesting a supplemental increase of \$3,275,000 in state funding for FY 2023-24 for the Universal Preschool program.

PROJECT STATUS

This is an emergency supplemental request for an increase of \$3.3 million in state funding spending authority for FY 2023-24.

PROJECT DESCRIPTION

In FY 2021-22, DEC was appropriated \$3.5 million in state funding through a supplemental request to build the technology to support the launch of the Universal Preschool Program. The funding supported the creation and launch of a minimal viable product for the functionalities needed to support the Universal Preschool Program, including the provider portal, family application, performance reporting integration and dashboard, family provider and matching algorithm, and integration with other systems for licensing. This allowed for families to be matched with providers and develop a baseline of reporting capabilities. Stakeholder feedback highlighted a number of issues with the current system.

The requested funding in this supplemental will be used to improve provider registration, family application processing, matching families with providers, and reporting capabilities of the system. Additionally, the department will include a pre-registration phase and a direct enrollment phase. These additions will enhance the matching algorithm and reduce the amount of matches made between children and programs for which they do not qualify.

PROJECT JUSTIFICATION

The Universal Preschool Program Application system was launched for providers in December 2021 and for families on January 17, 2022. By October 2023, the system had received over 45,000 applications and matched over 40,000 preschoolers to programs. Without improvements, the department noted the possible outcome of a decline in provider participation while applications continue to increase.

COST-BENEFIT ANALYSIS

The department was unable to provide a cost-benefit analysis since the system could continue to function as the existing minimum viable product. However, it will diminish the experience of the providers and families it is meant to serve.

PROJECT COST INFORMATION

The department provided the following project cost information:

- Automatic updates, data exchange, and process support: \$755,000
- Providers-Data Visualization: \$767,500
- Family application-eligibility, qualifying factors, district-to-district: \$722,000
- Limited Conditions for Operation-Data visualization, exchange, and process support: \$125,000
- Data Reporting-Additional reporting capabilities for all users: \$345,000
- Systems-tasking and communication tracking for "tickets" and matching data access arrangement: \$510,500