



Strategic Action Plan Template for Expansion Grantees

MA EEC CPPI Project

Grantee Name:	Lowell Public Schools
Lead Agency (LEA):	Lowell Public Schools
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Introduction

The purpose of this template is to provide you with a framework with which to develop a strategic plan for your continued CPPI model of preschool in your community and ultimately assist you in implementing towards systems change. A part of this process includes reflecting on information that you have learned from your Needs Assessment and Financial Modeling undertakings.

The sections of template include:

- [Mission](#) and [Vision](#) statements which provide an opportunity for you to articulate your purpose and aim for preschool in your community.
- [Needs Assessment Information](#) which provides you with an opportunity to list key partners involved in conducting/updating your needs assessment.
- [Overall Progress](#) which provides a brief snapshot of progress made in assessing and meeting each priority.
- **CPPI Priority I, II, and III** sections which provide an opportunity for you to provide a critical assessment specific to each priority.
 - Within each priority section, there are notes about expectations for the given priority and then 3 steps with guiding questions for grantees to document their strengths and areas for improvement. The first step involves reflecting on findings from your Needs Assessment; the second step involves considering what policies, strategies, processes, etc. may be responsible for those findings; the third step involves explicating what steps you plan to take to address those findings and responsible factors.
 - It is important that you fill in information in all relevant columns and rows.
- [Financial Modeling Reflection](#) which provides you with an opportunity to summarize the status of efforts to best understand cost and revenue sources as they apply to your model and your strategic plan.



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MISSION

What is the purpose of your current CPPI-funded model for serving preschoolers in your community? (Please write your mission statement in one sentence).

Example from the Massachusetts Strategic Action Plan: "The Massachusetts Department of Early Education and Care (EEC) creates the conditions for children, youth, and families to thrive socially, academically, and economically."

Since the launch of the Lowell Early Childhood Council (LECC) in 1990, Lowell has been on a mission to develop and expand preschool access for all three-, four-, and five-year-olds within the city.

VISION

What is your community's aim for preschoolers in the next 5-years?

Example from the Massachusetts Strategic Action Plan: "EEC's vision is that children, youth, and families reach their full potential now and in the future."

Lowell Public Schools will be a model of equitable, accessible, and effective education, where families are embraced as integral partners in their children's learning journey. We envision a future where every child has access to early education to cultivate curiosity and a lifelong love of learning. We will break down barriers to access in order to meet the needs of families in Lowell. A strength-based approach to serving families through partnerships in the community will expand our reach and offer parent choice. Our district will prioritize inclusive early childhood education by establishing dedicated PreK centers with full-day preschool programs that meet the diverse needs of families and support school readiness.

We will work with school leaders, teachers, and paraprofessionals through coaching and feedback to ensure all educators are supported through cross-departmental collaboration. Professional development will be offered to support the unique knowledge, skills, and strategies when providing rich instruction to young children 3 to 6 years old. Every student, including those identified disabilities, will have access to personalized, high-quality instruction as outlined in their IEPs through a continuum of programming that promotes inclusion. Together, we will create an inclusive, nurturing, and innovative learning environment that prepares all students for success.



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NEEDS ASSESSMENT INFORMATION

Please list key partners / community-based organizations involved in your Needs Assessment in the table.

Partner Name	Title	Organization
Theresa Tha	Youth Coordinator	Cambodian Mutual Assistance Assoc.
Anjali Bhagat	SOR-PEC Grant Coordinator	City of Lowell
Thomas Golden	City Manager	City of Lowell
Cheryl Finney	Child Development Officer	Clarendon
Thais Ligo	Lowell Director	Clarendon
LeaAnn Huber	Operations Director	Community Teamwork
Meghan Siembor	Division Director	Community Teamwork
Shawna Doran	Deputy Division Director	Community Teamwork
Denise Muro	Interpreting/Translation Manager	Found in Translation
James Linnehan, Jr.	President and CEO	Gr. Lowell Community Foundation
Kerrie D'Entremont	Executive Director	Greater Lowell Health Alliance
Deborah Dobens	Director	Greater Lowell YMCA
Vanna Howard	State Representative	Joint Committee on Education
Lina Gruca	Director	Lowell Day Nursery
Mitzy Mauricio	Opioid Response Early Childhood Coordinator	Lowell Public Health
Anna Hueston	Early Childhood Specialist	Lowell Public Schools
Carolyn Rocheleau	Title I Director	Lowell Public Schools
Darcie Coleman	Social Worker Family Resource Center	Lowell Public Schools
Fatima Desousa	Culturally and Linguistically Sustaining Practices Coordinator	Lowell Public Schools
Jennifer Stack	Preschool Teacher	Lowell Public Schools
Kathleen Huntley	Principal	Lowell Public Schools
Kerry Wilcox	Principal	Lowell Public Schools
Kevin Andriolo	Principal	Lowell Public Schools
Latifah Phillips	Chief Equity and Engagement Officer	Lowell Public Schools
Lauren Wehry	Early Childhood Specialist	Lowell Public Schools
Liam Skinner	Superintendent	Lowell Public Schools
Lisa Van Thiel	Early Childhood Coordinator	Lowell Public Schools
Matthew McLean	Principal	Lowell Public Schools
Melissa Newall	English Language Arts Coordinator, K-4	Lowell Public Schools
Nicole Bergeron	CPPI Coach Consultant	Lowell Public Schools
Roberta Keefe	Principal	Lowell Public Schools



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Susan LaCroix	Assistant Early Childhood Director	Lowell Public Schools
Tara Cole	Early Childhood Education Coach	Lowell Public Schools
Veronique Roberts	Data Analyst, Integration Technology Specialist	Lowell Public Schools
Zoe Dzineku	Director, Family Leadership Institute	Lowell Public Schools
Fred Bahou	Member	Lowell School Committee
Peter Lonsway	Deputy Superintendent	National Park Service
Maria Cunha	Board Member	Parker Foundation
Alison Gray	President	Pear Associates
Brittany Little	Consultant	Pear Associates
Lara Quiroga	Consultant (former)	Pear Associates
Karen John Hope	Director	Small Steps
Theo Groh		Wheelhouse Web Solutions

****NOTE: More than 150 people and organizations across the Lowell community were invited to participate in this process.***

Date of Most Recent Preschool Needs Assessment
Supply and Demand Assessment, August 2024
Family Survey and Community Champion Interviews Findings Report, June 2024



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OVERALL PROGRESS

This table is intended to help you track your overall progress in assessing and meeting each priority. For each row in the table, indicate the stage that you are currently at in your progress towards a complete Strategic Plan.

Policy Priority	Plans and implementation not yet started	Plans in place, but implementation has not yet started	At least one activity underway to advance goal	Several activities underway to advance goal
Priority I: Expansion and access				X
Priority II: Quality alignment				X
Priority III: Equitable access to special education and inclusion				X



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Priority I: Expansion and access to preschool

Priority I Expectations

Grantees should implement a program model that overcomes the barriers that exist for families to have access to their program of choice and prioritizing the type of program structure that is most valued by families. In addition, communities should implement a funding structure for classrooms that meets the local capacity for serving preschool children. Identify and utilize grant and other funds to contract with and fund local EEC-licensed programs to provide free and/or affordable preschool opportunities and fund after-school/out of school time services for all families. Consideration should be paid to how to implement services for infants and toddlers as well as preschoolers and how to coordinate the services children receive as they grow.

Demographics and local composition of families

Implement programming that overcomes barriers for accessing services for cultural, linguistic, racial, ethnic, and socioeconomic composition of the families in the community. Identify and partner with programs that reflect the diversity of families and reduce the barrier that arise for families in making decisions about early education and care. Implement processes to reduce or eliminate barriers that exist for families of diverse learners to access services.

Comprehensive services

Implement a plan to provide additional supports that families and children need to access preschool, such as, Mental Health consultants, Social Workers, community family resources, transportation, etc. for children and families in need.



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Step 1: Priority I Needs Assessment Evidence

Needs Assessment Evidence

In the table below, describe what you learned from your Needs Assessment related to expansion and access to preschool. This assessment can be informed by your Community Profile, your Needs Assessment, and your Financial Model as well as your knowledge of preschool in your community and in Massachusetts. We have provided guiding questions for your responses, but you should feel free to add/delete rows where applicable according to your Needs Assessment findings and key questions of interest.

Guiding Questions <i>(Use these questions as a guide; you do not need to address all of the questions)</i>	What strengths and challenges were surfaced in your Needs Assessment?	What issues are you addressing in this planning process?
<p>What are the gaps between preschool supply and demand in your community? <i>Consider the following issues as relevant:</i></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none">• <i>What does your Community Profile tell you about the diversity of families in your community? What variety of family needs exist in your community? What programs exist to meet these needs/ preferences?</i>• <i>Where do families live in your community? Where are programs located? What transportation options are available?</i>• <i>Are there differences between parent care preferences and the availability of those services?</i>• <i>What number or percentage of families need and/ or have access to</i>	<p>As detailed in the Supply and Demand Assessment and Findings Report, many children are not enrolled in preschool because of the lack of affordable seats, the lack of full-day programs to accommodate working families, and the lack of transportation to ensure children can get to and from preschool. Furthermore, the supply assessment highlights that providers are unable to expand programming due to limited space or workforce challenges.</p>	<p>Conducting a facilities assessment is a critical step for ensuring that the expansion of preschool-for-all is effective, sustainable, and meets the needs of the community.</p> <p>Promoting safe and affordable transportation options for preschool is essential for ensuring equitable access to education, supporting families, enhancing child safety and well-being, and promoting consistent attendance and positive academic and social outcomes.</p>

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<i>10 or more hours of care in your community? How many/ what percentage of families can the current supply support?</i>		
How do families find preschool programs in your community? What information is available to families, and who has access to this information?	As outlined in the Supply and Demand Assessment and the Family Findings Report, many families reported their child was not enrolled in preschool because they were unaware of available programs, did not know how to register their child, and/or were unfamiliar with eligibility requirements. Language gaps among native Portuguese-speaking, Spanish-speaking, and Khmer-speaking families compounded the lack of available information.	A multilingual information campaign for parents, caretakers, and families is essential for creating a supportive, inclusive, and effective educational environment. Furthermore, the creation of community-based hubs that included preschool information and supporting resources would benefit all families.
What challenges do families face in affording preschool in your community? What sources of funding exist to support affordable preschool for children in your community?	As mentioned in the Supply and Demand Assessment, the cost of early learning programming has been a top three barrier for all families since 2018. Affordable early education is critical to addressing issues of poverty in the Greater Lowell region. Early education costs in Greater Lowell are among the highest in the state, on par with or exceeding the cost of rent.	By engaging policymakers and philanthropic organizations and educating them about the value of early childhood education, LPS can build a strong foundation for its preschool-for-all model, ensuring that it is well-supported and creating a sustainable system that promotes educational equity. Blending and braiding funding will allow Lowell to continue meeting the needs of children and families in school and community settings.
What additional services do children and families need to support healthy development? What services are families currently accessing? How? What barriers exist to accessing services?	As stated in the Supply and Demand Assessment, in addition to affordability and access, more than one third of families stated they would need meals for their children during program hours to be able to access and use this program option. Providing meals	Ensure families have access to the information they need and want to make their choice about preschool for their children, including programs that offer meals.

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	and snacks at preschool can reduce the burden on busy parents to prepare food, saving time and effort. Preschool meal programs can be more cost-effective than individual meal preparation at home, especially for low-income families, implementation.	
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Step 2: Priority / Key Issues You Want to Address

Key Issues You Want to Address

In the table below, provide an assessment of what patterns you are seeing regarding policy, data, funding, and barriers that might be responsible for the Needs Assessment findings related to expansion and access to preschool that you included in Step 1. This assessment can be informed by your Community Profile, your Needs Assessment, and your Financial Model as well as your knowledge of preschool in your community and in Massachusetts.

Key Issues to Address <i>(pulled from the third column in Step 1)</i>	What do you think is causing these issues? How might you address the issue?
There is limited space to expand preschool programming. To house the early childhood team, and to provide families with space for playgroups and parenting classes	Conduct a facilities assessment to expand physical spaces suitable for preschool classrooms, playgroups, parenting classes, and early childhood team meetings
The lack of transportation impacts access to preschool programming	Explore safe and affordable transportation options
Families are unaware of the value of early childhood education, preschool program options, registration information, and eligibility requirements.	Develop a multilingual informational campaign and information resource hubs for families
Lowell lacks the financial resources to ensure a sustainable and expandable preschool model that is affordable for all families	Engage policymakers and philanthropic organizations to increase long-term, sustainable funding



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Step 3: Priority I Strategic Plan and Timeline

Strategic Plan and Timeline

In the table below, indicate your goal(s) and benchmark(s) related to expansion and access to preschool. Fill out the action steps, persons responsible, and target date for completion toward the goal(s). The first row of the table is an *example* of what information you might include in the rows that you complete.

Priority Goal	Benchmarks	Action Steps (Activities/Inputs/Outputs)	Persons/Organizations Responsible	Target Date
Conduct a facilities assessment to expand physical spaces suitable for preschool classrooms.	Conduct an assessment among existing preschool facilities to determine if there is space to accommodate additional preschool children without compromising the quality of education or safety standards.	<ol style="list-style-type: none">1. Create a facilities assessment tool that assesses existing and potential spaces and their accessibility2. Disseminate facilities assessment to all school and community-based preschools3. Compile findings of facilities assessment4. Identify additional accessible spaces among current preschool providers	<ul style="list-style-type: none">• Lisa Van Thiel• Darcie Coleman• Superintendent• Principal rep.• Community partner rep.	<i>Ongoing</i> through years 1-3 in alignment with budgets due April/May
	Assess other spaces in Lowell to determine available facilities that may be conducive to preschool classrooms,	<ol style="list-style-type: none">1. Connect with town manager to review existing city-owned properties	<ul style="list-style-type: none">• Lisa Van Thiel• Darcie Coleman• Superintendent• Principal rep.• Community partner rep.	<i>Ongoing</i> through years 1-3 in alignment with

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Priority Goal	Benchmarks	Action Steps (Activities/Inputs/Outputs)	Persons/Organizations Responsible	Target Date
	early childhood team meetings, playgroups, and parenting classes	<ol style="list-style-type: none"> 2. Enlist support from real estate agents to identify potential private facilities 3. Assess public and private facilities to determine if they may be conducive to preschool settings 4. Create a summary of potential spaces, including steps needed to ensure they comply with local, state, and federal regulations for preschool education 		budgets due April/May
	Explore alternatives to "brick-and-mortar" facilities for potential preschool classrooms	<ol style="list-style-type: none"> 1. Identify flexible and innovative facilities (i.e., mobile preschools, modular classrooms) 2. Create steps needed to ensure alternative spaces comply with regulations 3. Create a summary of potential options 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Lisa Van Thiel • Darcie Coleman • Superintendent • Principal rep. • Community partner rep. 	<i>Ongoing</i> through years 1-3 in alignment with budgets due April/May
Explore safe and affordable transportation options	Explore policy changes and funding options to enable public school bussing.	<ol style="list-style-type: none"> 1. Review existing policies related to school busing 2. Review existing financial resources supporting busing 3. Determine changes and funding needed to support preschool bussing 		

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Priority Goal	Benchmarks	Action Steps (Activities/Inputs/Outputs)	Persons/Organizations Responsible	Target Date
		4. Develop recommendations related to policy changes and blended/braided funding		
	Inform families about ride-sharing and public transportation options	<ol style="list-style-type: none"> 1. Identify and gather information on eligibility, geography, and cost from private entities and community providers that offer transportation services 2. Conduct research on ride sharing and public transportation options, including Uber, Lyft, Taxis, Lowell Regional Transit Authority, and Merrimack Valley Regional Transit Authority 3. Determine costs for usage and benefits available to working families to utilize ride-sharing and public transportation programs 4. Disseminate information to families about ride-sharing options and public transportation 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Carl Howell, Kayombo KamawuC 	

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Priority Goal	Benchmarks	Action Steps (Activities/Inputs/Outputs)	Persons/Organizations Responsible	Target Date
	Explore creative carpooling models that would encourage a sense of community while allowing families to share the transportation burden	<ol style="list-style-type: none"> 1. Create a task force of families 2. Conduct research using models from other communities 3. Develop a Lowell-specific preschool carpool model 4. Disseminate information to enlist family participation 		
	Develop a concrete list of transportation needs for families including documenting the number of students who are required to unenroll because of lack of transportation	<ol style="list-style-type: none"> 1. Develop transportation support review “committee” 2. Develop priority population list utilizing PEG transportation document previously developed 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Nicole Andrea-Bergeron • Lisa Van Thiel • Darcie Coleman • Kerry Wilcox • Community partner rep. 	
Develop a multilingual informational campaign in four most-common languages (English, Haitian-Creole, Khmer, Portuguese, and Spanish) and information resource hubs for families	Educate families about the value of early education and promotes available school and community programs to assure that all family members, regardless of their primary language, can engage with and support their child's early education effectively	<ol style="list-style-type: none"> 1. Develop a family leadership/focus group to inform communication and support dissemination 2. Create and disseminate brochures and flyers with clear and visually appealing information, including the use of infographics to simplify the registration process 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • CMMA • Coordinated Family and Community Engagement (CFCE) partners • Child Care Circuit, Barbara Bruker • Sara Bedell, INNE • Susan LaCroix • Lauren Wehrey 	

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Priority Goal	Benchmarks	Action Steps (Activities/Inputs/Outputs)	Persons/Organizations Responsible	Target Date
		<ol style="list-style-type: none"> Plan, promote and conduct family workshops and information nights that allow family members to ask questions Conduct traditional and social media outreach that includes posts and videos explaining the importance of preschool and how to enroll Collaborate with community organizations to share information through their email lists, meetings, and newsletters 		
	Establish consistent Preschool Information Hubs at key community locations as a one-stop resource to triage needs and identify best options.	<ol style="list-style-type: none"> Create Preschool Information Hub model, including materials, messages, and format Develop partnerships with potential HUB locations, including City Hall, Library, Social Services providers, Post Office, DMV, Health care providers, housing providers, family resource centers Develop marketing materials 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> LPS/Family Resource Center DTA WIC Karen JohnHope 	

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Priority Goal	Benchmarks	Action Steps (Activities/Inputs/Outputs)	Persons/Organizations Responsible	Target Date
		4. Update the Lowell Early Childhood Hub landing page		
Engage policymakers and philanthropic organizations to increase long-term, sustainable funding	Establish/strengthen relationships with policymakers who can allocate public funds and create financial support structures.	<ol style="list-style-type: none"> 1. Review local and state laws and policies that support preschool programming 2. Schedule meetings with elected officials to encourage policy change and allocation of resources toward preschool expansion 3. Schedule meetings with communities who utilize Title 1 and other funds to support sustainable preschool funding 4. Schedule meetings with communities who have established and have active preschool and/or early childhood cabinets 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Local government rep. • DESE • LPS • Community provider rep. • Greater Lowell Community Foundation 	
	Conduct outreach to local and regional philanthropic organizations to solicit grant support and encourage the creation of endowments and other financial	<ol style="list-style-type: none"> 1. Conduct research to identify funding resources 2. Develop a proposed funding model that includes funding sources needed, gaps, and needs to inform applications and requests to funders 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • CPPI COST STUDY • ABT Associates with EEC 	

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Priority Goal	Benchmarks	Action Steps (Activities/Inputs/Outputs)	Persons/Organizations Responsible	Target Date
	mechanisms that provide ongoing support for preschool programs.	<ol style="list-style-type: none">3. Apply for grants and other funding mechanisms in support of preschool expansion4. Advocate for the establishment of an endowment for long-term sustainability		



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Priority II: Building locally aligned quality

Priority II Expectations

On track to Third Grade

Develop and implement a plan that addresses the community's expectations for learning goals for children along the birth to three continuum. Implement a plan to deliver programming that best serves children's needs. Communities should consider the development of a road map that identifies key developmental domains and local goals for success.

Local supports for quality alignment

Implement a plan for the community to fully utilize local supports for quality interactions, job embedded professional development and instructional leadership support to effectively support children's development. Implement a plan to support the use of instructional tools and other resources that align across all settings that care for young children, including community supports that address the cultural, linguistic, racial, ethnic, and socioeconomic composition of the families in the community, taking into account how these supports differ for services to infants, toddlers, and preschoolers.

Quality curriculum and assessment

Determine if the current curricula are well-balanced; evidence-based; supportive of the development of all children socially, emotionally, physically, and intellectually; and responsive to the local cultural and linguistic context. Utilizing the Curriculum Rubric Foundational Document as a guide, assemble a team to attend an EEC sponsored Curriculum Rubric Review training to review current curriculum or to complete a review of newly identified curriculum. If you determine the selection of a new curriculum is needed, consider how the community can maximize funding to support the purchase of quality curriculum and materials. Implement a plan that utilizes formative assessment tools to collect data on child outcomes that demonstrate overall skill development and individualization of instructional tools and support successful a successful transition to kindergarten.

Support for diverse learners

Implement clear guidelines to support diverse learners that support utilizing materials and curriculum activities to sustain partnerships and provide families an opportunity to provide input on content. Identify and implement program activities that support the curriculum providing multiple means of accessing learning experiences for diverse learners.

Professional development

Communities should develop and implement a comprehensive plan and budget for professional learning opportunities for educators across the communities that includes Instructional Leadership opportunities, data driven coaching models and job embedded supports. Communities should consider how to support the local coordination around these opportunities and implement a plan to overcome identified barriers to educator engagement in learning opportunities.



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Step 1: Priority II Needs Assessment Evidence

Needs Assessment Evidence

In the table below, describe what you learned from your Needs Assessment related to locally aligned preschool quality. This assessment can be informed by your Community Profile, your Needs Assessment, and your Financial Model as well as your knowledge of preschool in your community and in Massachusetts. We have provided guiding questions for your responses, but you should feel free to add/delete rows where applicable according to your Needs Assessment findings and key questions of interest.

Guiding Questions <i>(Use these questions as a guide; you do not need to address all of the questions)</i>	What strengths and challenges were surfaced in your Needs Assessment?	What issues are you addressing in this planning process?
What goals does your community have for preschool children's success? <i>Consider the following issues as relevant:</i> <ul style="list-style-type: none">• What hopes do parents have for their children and how do they see preschool programs supporting these goals?• What goals does the community have for children's success in kindergarten and beyond?• How do families, preschool programs and public schools work together to support these goals?	As outlined in the Supply and Demand Assessment, families want their children engaged in early learning programs for their social/language/emotional/cognitive development, to promote their children's interest in learning, and to ensure kindergarten readiness. Families felt that no matter the setting, teachers must be qualified, and the space and curriculum must be developmentally appropriate.	Recruiting and retaining highly qualified educators for preschool is crucial for Lowell's effort to provide high-quality early childhood education. Educator retention positively contributes to continuity of care and relationships, the quality of education, and community and family engagement. Furthermore, retaining educators reduces the costs associated with recruitment, training, and onboarding and allows programs to reallocate resources toward educational programming and staff development.
How much alignment is there across the local preschool opportunities? <i>Consider the following issues as relevant:</i>	As shared in the Supply and Demand Assessment, families indicated the top three quality factors were that the program engaged them in their children's	Preschool programs can address a variety of family needs through partnerships with other providers, enhancing the overall support and resources available to families. Ensuring

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<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • <i>What aspects of preschool experiences are consistent across the system? What are the differences?</i> • <i>How is quality defined in the community and how do preschool programs strive to provide quality care?</i> • <i>How much continuity is there between children's preschool and kindergarten experiences? What coordination exists to support successful transitions?</i> • <i>What curricula are in use across the community? To what extent are curricula aligned around quality goals and aligned experiences for children?</i> 	<p>development, educators knew about child development, and the program provided access to other supports and services for their children and family.</p>	<p>families have access to wraparound supports helps to address the social, emotional, and financial needs that may impact learning</p>
<p>What professional learning opportunities and professional qualification expectations exist in the community?</p> <p><i>Consider the following issues as relevant:</i></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • <i>Do professional learning opportunities differ by program?</i> • <i>Do professional qualifications differ by program?</i> • <i>How do educators have access to training around core skills necessary to implement a quality program?</i> 	<p>Various organizations offer professional development programs to enhance the skills of early childhood educators. Many organizations offer tuition reimbursement, in-house training, and online platforms for mandatory training. Funding and support are provided for attending conferences, workshops, and certificate programs. Some programs also offer coaching and consultation services for mental health and behavioral issues. Lowell Public Schools, in collaboration with other organizations, offer professional development days and training, focusing on curriculum development and special education. Training programs are often tailored to meet the specific needs of staff.</p>	<p>Lowell Public Schools, in collaboration with other organizations, offer professional development days and training, focusing on curriculum development and special education. Training programs are often tailored to meet the specific needs of staff</p>



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Step 2: Priority II Key Issues You Want to Address

Key Issues You Want to Address

In the table below, provide an assessment of what patterns you are seeing regarding policy, data, funding, and barriers that might be responsible for the Needs Assessment findings related to locally aligned preschool quality that you included in Step 1. This assessment can be informed by your Community Profile, your Needs Assessment, and your Financial Model as well as your knowledge of preschool in your community and in Massachusetts.

Key Issues to Address <i>(pulled from the third column in Step 1)</i>	What do you think is causing these issues? How might you address the issue?
High-quality programming is an important factor for families in selecting a preschool for their child	Qualified educators enhance early learning outcomes, promote long-term academic success, support diverse learners, ensure compliance with education standards, and encourage innovation.
There is inconsistency in curricula used across school and community-based programs	Update preschool curriculum modules using information obtained from reviews and work developed to fill in identified gaps.
Families rely on preschools to help them access resources and address basic needs	Preschool programs can address a variety of family needs through partnerships with other providers, enhancing the overall support and resources available to families.



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Step 3: Priority II Strategic Plan and Timeline

Strategic Plan and Timeline

In the table below, indicate your goal(s) and benchmark(s) related to locally aligned preschool quality. Fill out the action steps, persons responsible, and target date for completion toward the goal(s). The first row of the table is an *example* of what information you might include in the rows that you complete.

Priority Goal	Benchmarks	Action Steps (Activities/Inputs/Outputs)	Persons/Organizations Responsible	Target Date
LPS and its community partners will recruit and retain highly qualified educators	Utilize proven educator recruitment strategies	<ol style="list-style-type: none">1. Establish and strengthen partnerships with colleges and universities2. Conduct networking among early childhood programs and professionals3. Develop generic ECE role-specific career ladder and degree attainment roadmaps to be shared across the community4. Encourage in-house career development channels5. Focus on hiring special education teachers to staff inclusive preschool classrooms6. Establish common criteria to reviewing quality candidates	<ul style="list-style-type: none">• Paraprofessional rep• Lisa Van Thiel• Community provider rep.	

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Priority Goal	Benchmarks	Action Steps (Activities/Inputs/Outputs)	Persons/Organizations Responsible	Target Date
	Offer competitive compensation and benefits, professional development opportunities, access to evidence-based educational resources and tools, and ongoing coaching.	<ol style="list-style-type: none"> 1. Research industry standards for compensation and benefits within Lowell/Massachusetts 2. Implement a coaching and mentoring system where educators receive ongoing feedback and support 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Paraprofessional rep. • LPS • Community provider rep. 	
	Continue to offer a positive and supportive workplace culture that values collaboration, creativity, and mutual respect among staff members	<ol style="list-style-type: none"> 1. Establish regular meetings and feedback loops for sharing of ideas and feedback 2. Organize team-building events to foster collaboration 3. Develop initiatives that celebrate backgrounds, cultures, and perspectives 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Paraprofessional rep. • LPS • Community provider rep. 	
Provide consistent preschool curricula across settings that engages family members in their child's education.	Update preschool curriculum modules using information obtained from reviews and work developed to fill in identified gaps, including supporting and engaging learners with different access points such as those with disabilities and multi-language learners.	<ol style="list-style-type: none"> 1. Recruit educators and colleagues to participate in a working group 2. Facilitated work group meetings that include reviewing documents, identifying gaps, exploring alignments across programs, and using data to inform actions 3. Collaborate with workgroup and potential partners to update curriculum modules 4. Develop home-school links for 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Curriculum Instructional Department at LPS • Attune – Consultant for Language and Literacy • EEC • DESE • American Institute for Research (AIR) • Teacher and educator reps from school-based and community-based settings 	

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Priority Goal	Benchmarks	Action Steps (Activities/Inputs/Outputs)	Persons/Organizations Responsible	Target Date
		curriculum modules 5. Conduct professional development on updated curriculum including tiered implementation	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Family member of a multi-lingual learner Family member of a child with Autism 	
Ensure families have access to wraparound supports	Serve as a resource to help connect families with resources that help to address the social, emotional, and financial needs that may impact learning	1. Compile information about financial assistance programs, nutritional supports, housing supports, and early childhood subsidies, among other resources. 2. Collaborate with local health providers to facilitate access to regular health check-ups, vaccinations, and medical screenings for children. 3. Partner with local providers to conduct workshops on child nutrition, developmental milestones, and health-related topics so that parents and caregivers can support their child's development at home 4. Promote parenting classes or support groups focused on stress management, positive parenting 5. Explore the implementation of child wellness centers that will help families provide	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Karen Smith, Small Steps Greater Lowell Health Alliance Needs Assessment Lowell Community Health 	

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Priority Goal	Benchmarks	Action Steps (Activities/Inputs/Outputs)	Persons/Organizations Responsible	Target Date
		<p>families with emotional and social support through activities such as art and reading</p> <p>6. Work with mental health professionals to provide referrals for counseling services or behavioral support for children and families, promote emotional well-being, and address social-emotional challenges.</p>		
	Develop and foster relationships with family child care centers to ensure family choice and additional options to fill family needs	<ol style="list-style-type: none"> 1. Identify family child care centers 2. Develop a relationship-building strategy that includes messaging of benefits 3. Conduct outreach and schedule initial introductory meeting(s) 4. Develop a shared collaboration plan 5. Establish and evaluate feedback channels 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Family child care providers • School based rep. • Community partner rep. • Darcie Coleman 	



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Priority III: Equitable access to special education and inclusion

Priority III Expectations

Special education service needs and support for diverse learners

Implement a program design that provides itinerant services to children placed with community-based providers. Clearly define how transitions from early intervention services to special education services are managed. Develop a cost sharing model that utilizes Chapter 70 and other grant opportunities to support the Itinerant Team model and reduces additional CPPI funding over time. Implementation of program design should include attention to how to determine challenges families face regarding care for children who are dual-language learners and children who have been identified as having special needs, as well as regarding implementation of a child's IEP goals. Communities should plan to reduce possible barriers to access for families as it pertains to cost, length of day, and transportation.

Transitions and referrals

Communities should implement a plan that improves the local system of screening and referrals with consideration of how transitions into early intervention and from early intervention to preschool special education is supported. Implementing a plan that reduces the number of transitions in a child's day for those families who require a longer day of care.



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Step 1: Priority III Needs Assessment Evidence

Needs Assessment Evidence

In the table below, describe what you learned from your Needs Assessment related to equitable access to special education and inclusion. This assessment can be informed by your Community Profile, your Needs Assessment, and your Financial Model as well as your knowledge of preschool in your community and in Massachusetts. We have provided guiding questions for your responses, but you should feel free to add/delete rows where applicable according to your Needs Assessment findings and key questions of interest.

Guiding Questions <i>(Use these questions as a guide; you do not need to address all of the questions)</i>	What strengths and challenges were surfaced in your Needs Assessment?	What issues are you addressing in this planning process?
<p>Where are children in need of special education services enrolled, and what gaps in access exist for these children and their families?</p> <p><i>Consider the following issues as relevant:</i></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none">• <i>What is the referral process for special education in your community, and who has access to it?</i>• <i>How many children receive special education services in your public schools in kindergarten and early elementary years? Are there gaps between what you know about children in need of special education services prior to elementary school and the children receiving services once they get to elementary school?</i>	<p>Less than 25% of students meet 3rd-grade English Language Arts and Math expectations, and more than half read below grade level. There is a clear correlation between a lack of participation in early educational programming and performance gaps in achievement data among high-need student populations, including students with disabilities and English learners.</p> <p>While ASQ is widely used in the community, many families do not understand screening purpose or accept assistance based on evaluation results.</p>	<p>Screening all incoming Kindergarten students will assist in balancing class lists allowing teachers to address inconsistent levels of readiness.</p> <p>Educating families about child development milestones and programming to support children to reach milestones will help families accept available resources.</p>

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<i>What might be responsible for those gaps?</i>		
How is the transition to preschool and identification of special education needs handled for children receiving Early intervention services? How is that transition managed?	While referrals come from Early Intervention, pediatricians, and early learning programs to LPS, there is inconsistent knowledge about the referral process.	Educating early learning programs and Early Intervention on LPS' referral process professionals about the referral process and its purpose will help ensure a smoother and more consistent referral process.
What professional learning opportunities around inclusive preschool environments and practices do educators teaching children with special needs have access to? Are there differences in this access by program type?	As outlined in the Supply and Demand Assessment, programs reported significantly different enrollment rates for children with IEPs. Programs were also mixed in terms of their ability to provide services on-site.	LPS provides professional development and invites all community members to participate in these opportunities. Targeted professional development around inclusive practices and referrals is needed.
How are identified services funded? Are there services needed that are not currently funded?	As indicated in the Supply and Demand Assessment, Lowell received funding from multiple local and state sources to support a variety of needs.	Blending and braiding funding will allow Lowell to continue meeting the needs of children and families in school and community settings.
<p>To what extent are opportunities available that meet the needs of diverse learners? <i>Consider the following issues as relevant:</i></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <i>What gaps and barriers exist in preschool access specifically for children in need of special education services, dual language learners, children from low-income families, and children in other marginalized groups?</i> <i>What are the patterns of needs/ family preferences that exist in the community?</i> <i>To what extent are programs responsive to these needs?</i> 	Many children in Lowell have behavioral or experience learning challenges resulting from trauma and other factors (i.e., racism, family violence, housing instability, food insecurity). These children need additional support; however, they do not have disabilities that qualify them for an IEP.	Comprehensive services (i.e., inclusion specialists, clinical psychologists) to support educators across early learning centers are cost effective and benefit the entire early learning community.



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Step 2: Priority III Key Issues You Want to Address

Key Issues You Want to Address

In the table below, provide an assessment of what patterns you are seeing regarding policy, data, funding, and barriers that might be responsible for the Needs Assessment findings related to equitable access to special education and inclusion that you included in Step 1. This assessment can be informed by your Community Profile, your Needs Assessment, and your Financial Model as well as your knowledge of preschool in your community and in Massachusetts.

Key Issues to Address <i>(pulled from the third column in Step 1)</i>	What do you think is causing these issues? How might you address the issue?
Students are entering Kindergarten with varying levels of readiness, partially due to inconsistent screening and activity resulting from findings.	Establish data systems of sharing across the community and among providers to inform program planning and evaluation.
While referrals come from Early Intervention, pediatricians, and early learning programs to LPS, there is inconsistent knowledge about the referral process.	Educate early learning programs, early intervention specialists, and pediatricians about the referral process
As outlined in the Supply and Demand Assessment, programs reported significantly different enrollment rates for children with IEPs. Programs were also mixed in terms of their ability to provide services on-site.	The LPS CPPI team is working in partner programs to provide special education services to meet student IEPs.
As indicated in the Supply and Demand Assessment, Lowell received funding from multiple local and state sources to support a variety of needs.	Continue to blend and braid funding , continue to complete cost study, and report data on IEPs to DESE for children served in community programs.
Many children in Lowell have behavioral or experience learning challenges resulting from trauma and other factors (i.e., racism, family violence, housing instability, food insecurity). These children need additional supports; however, they do not have disabilities that qualifies them for an IEP.	Provide comprehensive services (i.e., inclusion specialists, clinical psychologists) to support educators across early learning centers and ensure lower student ratios to meet the needs of high-need students.



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Step 3: Priority III Strategic Plan and Timeline

Strategic Plan and Timeline

In the table below, indicate your goal(s) and benchmark(s) related to equitable access to special education and inclusion. Fill out the action steps, persons responsible, and target date for completion toward the goal(s). The first row of the table is an *example* of what information you might include in the rows that you complete.

Priority Goal	Benchmarks	Action Steps (Activities/Inputs/Outputs)	Persons/Organizations Responsible	Target Date
Establish data systems to inform program planning and evaluation.	Expand screening among all incoming preschool and kindergarten students	<ol style="list-style-type: none">1. Collect summative data on participation in preschool2. Collect Early Literacy Indicator data3. Engage assessment professionals to assist with screening	<ul style="list-style-type: none">• LPS - QIP Implementation Team• Screening Team	
	Create a data system for tracking students and families	<ol style="list-style-type: none">1. Track referrals to and from LPS and community-based early childhood programs2. Track referrals for comprehensive services (i.e., mental health, WIC, food pantry), participation in transition activities (EI, PK-K), and attendance at informational meetings, parent education, and playgroups3. Utilize data to assist in	<ul style="list-style-type: none">• Lisa Van Thiel• Darcie Coleman• Lauren Wehry• Anna Hueston• Vero Roberts• Community provider rep.• Early Intervention rep.• Family child care rep.	

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Priority Goal	Benchmarks	Action Steps (Activities/Inputs/Outputs)	Persons/Organizations Responsible	Target Date
		balancing kindergarten class lists		
Educate early childhood, Early Intervention, and pediatricians about the LPS referral process	Train professionals about the referral process	<ol style="list-style-type: none"> 1. Develop training materials 2. Schedule trainings for early childhood providers, early intervention professionals, and pediatricians on all referral processes including LPS, CTI, Behavioral health, Special Education, Early Intervention, Child Find, and the associated forms for each referral process 3. Conduct trainings 4. Evaluate trainings 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Early intervention rep. Leslie Scilian • Carla Bergeron • Tracy • Casey Bowers • Lisa Van Thiel • Darcie Coleman • CPPI partner organizations • Susan LaCroix • Child Find • Karen JohnHope 	



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FINANCIAL MODELING REFLECTION

This table is intended to help you reflect on your overall progress in assessing your expenditures and sources of revenue as they relate to your action plans. Please add applicable areas according to your community needs and goals.

Stage	Plans and implementation not yet started	Plans in place, but implementation has not yet started	At least one activity underway to advance goal	Several activities underway to advance goal
<i>Identification of the potential classroom costs of the planned model</i>				X
<i>Identification of funding gaps</i>			X	
<i>Consideration of potential funding sources</i>			X	
<i>Consideration of mechanism(s) required to sustain implementation</i>			X	

Date of Most Recent Financial Model



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ENDORSEMENTS

Please list endorsements from named collaborators.

Note: This template was adapted from the *Early Childhood Equity Strategic Plan Template*, the *Children's Equity Project*, and several state early childhood education strategic plans.