

STATEMENT OF COUNTY READINESS

EARLY LEARNING PILOT GRANT PROGRAM

RESPONSES DUE: JUNE 30, 2014

DATE ISSUED: JUNE 4, 2014

SEND RESPONSES TO:
MELANIE BRIZZI
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FROM:
DAWN MODLIN
EXECUTIVE DIRECTOR
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WRITTEN STATEMENT OF COUNTY READINESS

Instructions: Your written statement may not exceed **eight (8)** single spaced pages. Additional pages will not be reviewed or considered. A copy of the language of HEA 1004 may be found on the website of the Indiana General Assembly. An authorized representative for the respondent *and any co-respondents* must sign this cover page.

RESPONDENT INFORMATION	
County: Noble County	
Legal Name: United Way of Noble County	Mailing Address: 119 W. Mitchell Street Kendallville, IN 46755
Contact Name: Dawn Modlin Contact Title: Executive Director (Single point of contact for communication)	Contact Phone: 260-347-6822 Contact Email Address: executivedirector@uwnoble.org
COUNTY INFORMATION	
Co-Respondents (please list): John Sampson Northeast Indiana Regional Partnership (Big Goal Collaborative)	Estimated Number of Children to be Served (county-wide): 249
	Estimated Number of Eligible Providers (county-wide): 8
AUTHORIZED REPRESENTATIVE	
I HEREBY CERTIFY that, to the best of my knowledge, the information contained in this statement is correct.	
Designated Representative (Printed Name): Dawn D Modlin	Title: 6/30/14
Signature of Designated Representative: Dawn D Modlin	Date: 6/30/14
Additional Signatures (of co-respondents, if necessary): John R. Sampson	

I. EXECUTIVE SUMMARY

This Statement of County Readiness was requested for the purpose of soliciting the State of Indiana and FSSA's approval of Noble County, Indiana as one of the five counties to participate in HEA 1004 Early Learning Pilot Grant Program. The United Way of Noble County held a Pre-K Pilot task force meeting on June 19, 2014 with representatives from Early Childhood Alliance, Community Action of Northeast Indiana, Dekko Foundation, Noble County Community Foundation, East Noble School Corporation, West Noble School Corporation, LEAP of Noble County and Cole Center YMCA.

The discussion included the reality of Noble County being able to service the families targeted for this grant money and the ability to address indirect needs that may hinder families from using the grant money. These included things such as transportation, parent buy-in, accessibility to providers across the county, the accurate number of children in the targeted age group and the number of providers needed to service this number of children in Noble County.

It was recommended that United Way of Noble County submit the application with the intent of communicating some of the concerns and issues that need to be addressed prior to being selected as one of the five Early Learning Pilot Grant Program counties and hope that perhaps some further discussion and strategies could be initiated with FSSA.

II. COMMUNITY ENGAGEMENT

A) United Way of Noble County is a non-profit county wide fundraiser and community impact organization whose mission is to unite the communities' efforts to improve the quality of life. This is believed to be accomplished through education, income, and health. United Way partners with many agencies, businesses and organizations throughout the county in order to raise funds, allocate those funds to appropriate agencies that meet standards set by United Way's mission, and initiate and/or lead collaboration for direct community impact work **especially in the area of early childhood education and parent engagement**. This focus has begun recently with the newly hired full time Executive Director and strategic planning of the Board of Directors. An early education summit was held by United Way in March 2014 which brought together numerous agencies, organizations, school district superintendents and businesses of Noble County. **The following agencies below have all committed to working with United Way of Noble County to make an impact in early childhood education:**

1. **The Dekko Foundation** whose mission is to foster economic freedom through education is located in Noble County. They invest in projects that help children and youth, up to age 18, build the skills, knowledge and character that they'll need to travel the path toward economic freedom. Their grant making in childhood development is all about ensuring that children have the developmental experiences that they need, at the time that they need them, to build that foundation of independence. They believe that quality early childhood education is the basis for a life of economic freedom. They

believe that early childhood is the most critical stage for children's social, emotional, intellectual, physical and spiritual development. Initiatives by The Dekko Foundation include **Before 5** which believes parents hold the potential to be their children's first and most influential teachers. But, parents of young children are busy, busy people who need help balancing the teaching of their children with the demands of providing for them. To change parents from overwhelmed to overjoyed they created **Before5**. **Before5** has a website that gives parents ideas on how to teach their child and still get everything done. In their Indiana grant making areas they invest in a Teachable Moment Mentor who visits with groups of parents to offer ideas on how to teach their children and still get everything else done too. She has a wide range of informative and entertaining topics. <http://dekkofoundation.org/before5/> They have also initiated **Bloom** which believes the people who educate and care for very young children in preschools and childcare centers report often feeling overwhelmed by responsibility, expectations and finances. They believe that meeting the needs of children can be accomplished through simple, principle-based thinking. **Bloom!** sets out to change that feeling of being overwhelmed into one of 'more good days in the classroom.' <http://dekkofoundation.org/bloom1/>

2. **The Noble County Community Foundation's** mission is to improve the quality of life in Noble County by serving as a catalyst for positive change, enabling donors to carry out charitable intent, and making grants. They go beyond simply making grants that advance charitable activities but also identify current and emerging issues, stimulate resources to address those needs and help our region prepare for the future. This has included early childhood education.
3. **The Noble Economic Development Corporation's** mission is to provide coordinated economic development resources promoting the assets of Noble County. Their vision is to maximize the economic potential of Noble County's assets. Recently their focus has been upon **the impact that early childhood education has on the county's economic development**. They participated with the United Way of Noble County's early childhood task force and summit held in March and are committed to partnering future early childhood education initiatives.
4. **CANI or Community Action of Northeast Indiana** helps communities, families, and individuals remove the causes and conditions of poverty. Their vision is people coming together, helping one another, creating opportunities, empowering one another, restoring hope and promoting dignity and respect. One of the ways they do this is through their Early Head Start and Head Start program which is a federally funded, early childhood program, created to break the cycle of poverty by providing services to children from low-income families. This is not a child care service, rather home visitors come into the home weekly and work with parent and child on activities based on their child's needs. The emphasis is on child development, education, family self-sufficiency, and parenting skills. Dads and male role models in the home are also highly encouraged to participate in home visits.
5. **Early Childhood Alliance's** mission is to build better futures for young children by promoting and providing quality early childhood education and services for families,

early childhood professionals and the community. Their vision is for every young child to succeed and for families to be self-sufficient as a result of quality early childhood care and education. Their strategic priorities are to increase their impact throughout our region by collaboration with others and expansion of services to assist parents and child care providers in delivering quality early care and education, to model the highest standards of quality early care and education by managing child care centers that prepare children to enter school ready to learn and to serve as the key resource and chief advocate for the region for quality early care and education for young children. The Child Care Resource and Referral agency for Noble County is a fully invested partner in all early learning initiatives and interacts with every stakeholder in this Statement. Having developed the Paths to QUALITY™ that was ultimately adopted as Indiana's QRIS, ECA is well equipped to support efforts to engage families, assist providers in moving up in levels, and attracting broad-based community support for the Preschool Pilot.

6. **LEAP of Noble County** provides Noble County families and individuals with the power of literacy and the skills that promote lifelong success. LEAP of Noble County's vision is to ignite a learning revolution that results in a community that values family literacy and education, pursues lifelong learning, and empowers its individuals and families with the knowledge to follow and achieve their dreams. A recent program called Little LEAPS has received great response with 110 children from the West Noble School and 8 from the East Noble Schools participating. This program is intended to prepare Pre-K children over the summer for kindergarten. Their investment in this new Pre-K program is \$45,000.
7. **Cole Center YMCA** which has as its focus Youth Development, Healthy Living and Social Responsibility has been a supporter of early learning programs and initiatives. They provide a childcare program as well as a preschool for 3, 4, and 5 year olds. They currently serve 159 3-5 year olds with half of those being 4 year olds. They are partnering with the United Way of Noble County's early childhood education initiatives and are part of the task force as well as attending the Early Education Summit in March.
8. **Noble County Public Library (NCPL)** - Library cards are free to all Noble County residents, so adults have ample access to educational materials and programs for their young children at any of NCPL's three locations. ~~Story time is offered September through May.~~ Preschool Story time is designed as an early childhood introduction to peer interaction, good literature, and improved listening skills. The program incorporates books, finger plays, games, crafts, and various fun. An annual summer reading program that provides incentives for adults to interact with their children in ways that promote early learning.
9. **Kendallville and Limberlost Public Library** offers free library cards to residents of Wayne and Orange Township and the city of Kendallville, all in Noble County. Recently they initiated a new program for Preschoolers: 1,000 Books Before Kindergarten. It's easy for preschoolers and their parents to participate. They just stop in the library, sign up and check out one of the 100 bags, each including 10 books. Together they read the books inside and complete a fun activity, and repeat until they've read 1,000 books. One thousand books is a manageable goal, set after studying research that

2014 Indiana Early Learning Pilot Grant Program County Selection suggests amazing benefits for those who read for just 20 minutes a day. By completing the enriching activities tailored to each of the 100 bags and its theme, families can have fun and extend the positive impact the program has on children. Broken down, the program can be done by reading 3 books a day for a year - or stretched out over two years. It's challenging, but achievable. A child's progress will be charted in "schools" of fish in the library, for each 100 book goal completed. Children will receive prizes as they progress through the program.

10. East Noble, Central Noble and West Noble School Corporations have all participated in the United Way Early Childhood Education Summit and have shown interest in expanding their Pre-K services to children of Noble County. East Noble School District houses three preschool programs which serves 33 three and four year olds at this time. They have a waiting list of an additional 14 children. Based on community feedback there is belief that parents are interested in pre-K experiences within the school setting to help prepare children for Kindergarten as well as streamline family schedules when all siblings are attending the same facility.

11. Noble County is among 10 Northeastern Indiana Counties that align their early childhood work with **The Big Goal Collaborative**, a collective impact initiative designed to improve educational outcomes. All entities mentioned in this Statement are actively involved in some way striving to achieve the region's Big Goal of increasing the percentage of Northeast Indiana residents with high-quality degrees or credentials from 35% to 60% by 2025. Forty entities including schools, universities and agencies are involved in helping the Kindergarten Readiness Action Team achieve its vision of all children being prepared for success in school and life. Fifteen members of this group serve on the governor's Early Learning Advisory Committee's seven work groups to help shape the future of early learning in Indiana.

B) United Way of Noble County has contributed \$13,000 in the past campaign year (2013-14) towards Early Childhood Education agencies. It will be making significant changes to the partner agencies for the new campaign year (2014-15) with more focus on early childhood education initiatives and partner agencies. Dekko Foundation for the year 2013 invested close to \$200,000 towards early childhood education in Noble County and The Noble County Community Foundation has contributed grants in the amount of \$7,665 to agencies for early childhood education. They are also holding the funds in the amount of \$31,628 to be given to Little LEAPS, the program in early childhood education with LEAP of Noble County. At this time, no school district has used Title I funding for pre-kindergarten in the public schools.

III. FAMILY ENGAGEMENT

A) Early Childhood Alliance conducts two family engagement programs:

Parents As Teachers receives referrals from child care programs serving low income or under-served families. PAT program provides individualized focus on the needs of each family. Parent educators offer one-on-one support to families in their homes or in small groups, providing developmental information, periodic developmental screenings, health and safety information, and hands-on activities

that involve both parents and children. PAT served 60 families in the past year meeting with them in their home unless the center better serves their needs. A bi-lingual parent educator meets with families who speak English as a second language.

Book Buddies is an early learning program that helps parents encourage literacy and other early development skills. Small group sessions include songs, stories and age-appropriate activities for families. At each session, families receive books, puzzles, writing materials, blocks, art materials and activities to help extend the learning and literacy at home.

CANI - Early Head Start

The families are referred by community health clinics, hospitals and other agencies because they are assessed to be at high risk for child maltreatment due to lack of parenting knowledge, being low income or a single parent, and other risk factors. Families enroll just before or within 90 days of a child's birth and can remain in services until the child is 3. Caseworkers provide education on baby and toddler care, child development, nutrition, health and safety. Children receive developmental testing for gross and fine motor skills, social, emotional, and communication skills. Children with learning deficits are connected to medical or early intervention services. Parents receive information and materials to help develop an early interest in reading in their children. Parents are provided culturally relevant and understandable parenting materials and practical tools.

- B) **United Way of Noble County** over the past year has devoted an increasing amount of resources to early childhood development, recognizing that starting in the 0-5 age group has a significant impact on all of the three pillars for a quality of life in the future: education, income, and health. Significant early childhood initiatives of United Way include researching and considering investing in the **Let's Talk @ Initiative**: Modeled after a research-based program in Cambridge, MA, this initiative engages parents beginning at the birth of their child. Nurses deliver educational gifts and important brain development messages in hospitals. They would provide information about early learning resources in the community including Paths to QUALITY™ Child Care Search, the public libraries, LEAP of Noble County and other resources that may be developed in the near future. A follow-up mailing when their babies attain three months of age provides more resources and information about the importance of talking with their child. Weekly reminder messages are texted to parents along with age-appropriate tips on how to talk with their child from birth to four years of age.

- C) United Way of Noble County developed the Early Childhood Education Task Force that includes CANI, ECA, Dekko Foundation, Noble County Community Foundation, Noble County Economic Development Corporation, several childcare providers and the three school districts for the purpose of developing a strategy for identifying the number of children eligible for early childhood education, reasons that that families may not be participating in the current initiatives and how to engage parents in current and future early childcare education opportunities. There are 8 target reasons that the task force will be tackling: Accessibility/affordability, transportation, parent consumer education, parent buy-in, 0-5 readiness, collaboration across the

IV. PROVIDER CAPACITY

- A) There are currently 5 qualified eligible providers within Noble County. These include 1 child care center, 3 family child care, and 1 head start program. The combined capacity is 133 with only 19 vacancies at this time.
- B) The challenge in addition to capacity is that all of the eligible providers are located on the eastern side of the county and there are no eligible providers in the central and western part of the county. This presents an extreme challenge for communities such as Ligonier, Albion, Avilla, Rome City and other small communities. There are a total of 4 additional licensed providers who are either not participating or at level 3 or 4 on Paths to QUALITY™. Our Early Education Task Force plans to address these issues with further discussion and meeting with licensed providers to find out what may be keeping them from progressing with Paths to QUALITY™. If it is a funding issue then there may be opportunity through our funding collaboration to assist with this. There is discussion among the school corporations as to whether there would be funding for expanding pre-K programming and classrooms to help with the accessibility for our county.

V. FINANCIAL MATCH

- A) Noble County is extremely fortunate in having an active United Way as well as two foundations that are very interested in early education learning. There is a strong sense of collaboration with the three funders as well as with businesses, organizations and industries in our county. Several industries have vocalized financial commitments to early education initiatives once they are finalized. The honest concern that all the above share is to raise funds and not have local control of it. Discussion has shown favor for raising funds and entrusting them with the Noble County Community Foundation for disbursement through them to the specific needs and address the indirect needs shared in this statement.
- B) There is a strong confidence in sustaining support for pre-kindergarten services with local funding and disbursement.

VI. COUNTY READINESS AND PROGRAM IMPLEMENTATION

Noble County has some challenges to overcome such as the number of qualified providers and accessibility to these providers throughout the county. There is also the concern of whether offering grant money before addressing some of these internal issues would be wise use of the funds by FSSA. Despite these challenges, however, Noble County is fully committed to the improvement of early childhood education for our residents and will continue to work collaboratively for this essential need.