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Region 4 Strategic Plan

New Hampshire Early Childhood System

2022-2024

New Hampshire's
Preschool Development Grant

DEVELOPED BY

pear
ASSOCIATES

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I. BACKGROUND INFORMATION

Regional Early Childhood Structure

In 2019, New Hampshire (NH) received a three-year, $26.8 million Preschool Development Grant — Birth through Five (PDG B-5) to strengthen the state's early childhood care and education (ECCE) system. The grant is a collaboration between the University of New Hampshire (UNH), the NH Departments of Education (DOE) and Health and Human Services (DHHS), and the Governor's Council for Thriving Children. As part of its ECCE system-building work, the state created a regional early childhood structure to aid in coordinating and expanding services for children and their families.

Through a competitive procurement process, the NH PDG awarded grants to NH Early Childhood Regional Leads to develop a statewide system of partnerships. Amoskeag Health, which has overseen LAUNCH (Linking Actions for Unmet Needs in Children's Health) Manchester for nearly a decade, was selected to serve as the Lead Organization for Region 4. Amoskeag Health is partnering with The Upper Room Family Resource Center for this work.

Anchored by the cities of Manchester and Derry, Region 4 includes 17 communities with a total population of approximately 278K. Like all Regional Leads, Amoskeag Health received a $350,000 grant to enhance ECCE-school-family support collaborations and build infrastructure for cross-sector collaboration and alignment to coordinate resources and services within identified regions.

Structure of Region 4

The LAUNCH Region 4 Leadership Team oversees the activities within the Greater Manchester and Greater Derry areas. Current Leadership Team members include:

- Borja Alvarez de Toledo, President and Chief Executive Officer, Waypoint
- Jessica Emond, Operations Managers, Child Development Programs, Southern NH Services
- James Fauth, Director, Behavioral Health Improvement Institute
- Brenda Guggisberg, Executive Director, The Upper Room
- Christina Philibotte, Chief Equity Officer, Manchester School District
- Lara Quiroga, Director of Community-Integrated Health and Wellbeing, Amoskeag Health
- Meredith Young, Chief Impact Officer, Granite United Way

Region 4 Communities
- Atkinson
- Auburn
- Bedford
- Candia
- Chester
- Danville
- Derry
- Goffstown
- Hampstead
- Hooksett
- Londonderry
- Manchester
- New Boston
- Plaistow
- Salem
- Sandown
- Windham

Each sub-region has a LAUNCH Pad that focuses on understanding the needs of local communities and elevating these needs to the Leadership Team, building and broadening partner networks of ECCE representatives, exchanging information among LAUNCH Pad participants, and disseminating information about regional training. The Greater Manchester LAUNCH Pad will continue to grow its Queen City Family Advisory Committee, Early Learning Collaborative, and Community-Wide Pyramid Model Leadership Team. The Greater Derry LAUNCH Pad will stand up a Family Engagement Workgroup, Early Learning Collaborative, and a Community-Wide Pyramid Model Leadership Team.

Region 4 Leadership Team

The LAUNCH Region 4 Leadership Team contributes to a statewide comprehensive, coordinated, and sustainable early childhood system that aims to prepare children for kindergarten and academic achievement; build safe, healthy, and engaged families; and promote social and emotional health and wellbeing.

Leadership Team Vision

Young children and their families flourish in a coordinated system of supports and services

Leadership Team Mission

Promote and support an equitable and sustainable early childhood system that improves outcomes for young children and their families

The Leadership Team fulfills the NH Regional Early Childhood System goals and, to the degree possible, integrates the work of Greater Manchester LAUNCH Pad and Greater Derry LAUNCH Pad to include the following:

- Improving and strengthening state-regional connection and communication.
- Reducing gaps and duplication in and between regions.
- Serving as an efficient mechanism to distribute funding to communities.
- Building capacity and equipping families to connect with services.
- Addressing the needs of all Region 4 communities.
- Building on the successful work of Early Childhood stakeholders.
- Aligning and broadening existing Early Childhood networks.
- Creating an Early Childhood infrastructure that supports regional communities.
- Providing a pathway to sustainability beyond current government funding.

Strategic Planning Process

With PDG grant funds, the Region 4 Leadership Team embarked on a strategic planning process to create a blueprint for building ECCE-school-family support collaborations within the Greater Manchester and Greater Derry areas. Through the strategic planning process, Region 4 created high-level goals for region-wide capacity building and infrastructure development. Also, the strategic planning process incorporated measurable action steps for the Region 4 Leadership Team to assess and report on progress.

Region 4 Priorities
1. Equitable Early Childhood System
2. Engagement and Relationship Building Across Sectors
3. Communication and Coordination

The strategic planning process incorporated monthly convenings of Leadership Team members, a review of data to help Leadership Team members understand the needs across the region, completion of an early childhood capacity-building assessment, and the establishment of priorities to build and sustain the sub-regional LAUNCH Pads.

II. NEEDS ACROSS THE REGION

The Region 4 Leadership Team reviewed a range of data sources, including the South Central New Hampshire Public Health Network Community Health Needs Assessment 2020; Assessing Manchester's Urban Advantage, Greater Manchester Community Needs Assessment, June 2019; New Hampshire's Early Childhood System in the Time of COVID-19: Child Care Access and Regional Systems Coordination, October 2021; NH Division for Children, Youth, and Families 2020 Data Book; and United States Census 2020 data.

As shown in Figure 1, Region 4 includes seventeen communities. The largest communities (based on total population) are Bedford, Derry, Manchester, and Salem. The communities with the lowest median income are Derry, Hooksett, and Manchester, and the communities with the highest poverty rate are Danville, Derry, and Manchester.

Figure 1: Region 4 Communities

Town	Total Pop	% Under 5	Med. Household Income	Poverty Rate
Atkinson	7,087	3.7%	$112,009	2.1%
Auburn	5,946	5.2%	$110,163	1.1%
Bedford	23,322	6.3%	$135,374	3.2%
Candia	4,013	5.8%	$99,167	3.4%
Chester	5,232	4.7%	$133,214	2.2%
Danville	4,408	3.9%	$90,457	10.9%
Derry	22,897	6.1%	$69,813	7.9%
Goffstown	3,366	9.2%	$86,023	5.6%
Hampstead	8,998	5.3%	$88,250	4.3%
Hooksett	5,283	2.5%	$74,497	6.5%
Londonderry	11,645	4.2%	$107,813	2.6%
Manchester	115,644	5.2%	$62,087	13.1%
New Boston	326	13.3%	$132,386	2.4%
Plaistow	7,830	4.5%	$85,263	3.5%
Salem	30,089	4.6%	$90,673	3.2%
Sandown	6,548	6.5%	$112,634	6.8%
Windham	15,817	5.8%	$154,032	1.1%
Total/Avg.	**278,451**	**6.45%**	**$102,462**	**4.7%**

While most residents in Region 4 are white and non-Latinx, an increasing number of residents identify as Latinx, Black, Indigenous, or People of Color (BIPOC). As shown in Figure 2, close to 44,000 residents identify as BIPOC, and more than 48,000 residents identify as Latinx. Furthermore, over 36,000 residents speak a language other than English in their homes.

Figure 2: Demographic Indicators in Region 4

Town	Total Pop	BIPOC*	Latinx**	Language other than English at home
Atkinson	7,087	434	470	269
Auburn	5,946	415	448	130
Bedford	23,322	3,043	3,235	2,379
Candia	4,013	287	311	200
Chester	5,232	322	366	345
Danville	4,408	303	332	149
Derry	22,897	2,528	2,854	1,580
Goffstown	3,366	241	248	266
Hampstead	8,998	638	689	315
Hooksett	5,283	626	681	370
Londonderry	11,645	1,106	1,251	815
Manchester	115,644	26,900	30,036	24,401
New Boston	326	57	68	***
Plaistow	7,830	609	710	266
Salem	30,089	3,975	4,368	3,310
Sandown	6,548	436	488	111
Windham	15,817	1,821	1,941	1,344
TOTAL	**278,451**	**43,741**	**48,496**	**36,250**

*# not identifying as "White" to include American Indian/Alaska Native, Asian, Black/African American, Hispanic/Latino, Pacific Islander, Other race, two or more races
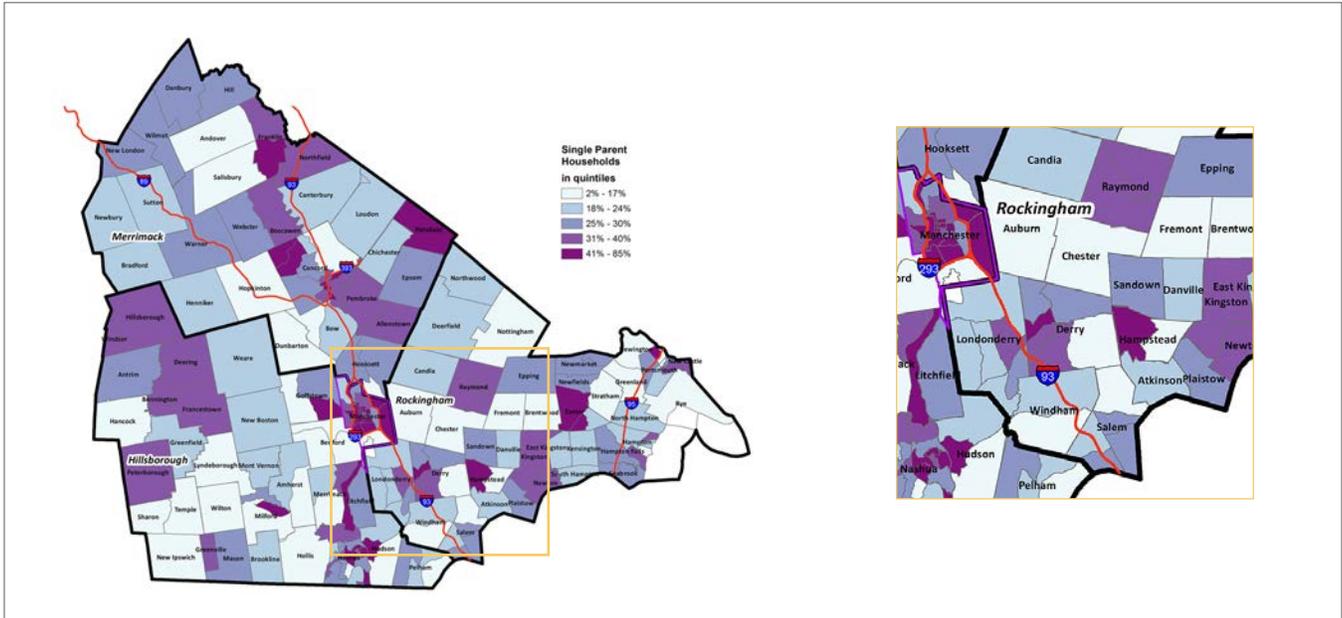
** Not identifying as "Not Hispanic or Latino

*** Less than 1%

Single-parent households are more likely to experience financial challenges.[1] Figure 3 indicates the percentage of single-parent households throughout the Region. Parts of Derry, Goffstown, Hampstead, and Manchester are in the highest quartile in the region (41% - 85%) for the percentage of single-parent households, which means these communities have increased need based on this measure. Only three entire towns, Auburn, Bedford, and Chester, fall in the region's lowest quartile (2% - 17%).

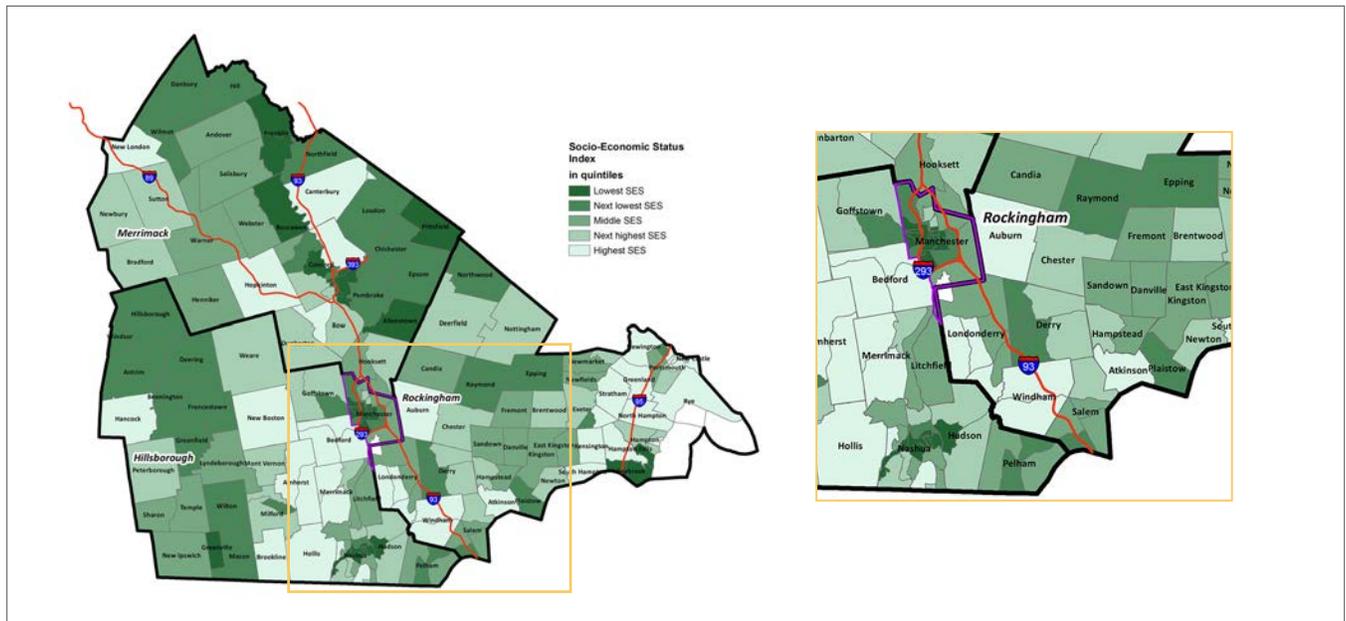*Figure 3: Single Parent Households in Region 4*

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1   Stack, J., R. & Meredith, A. (2018). The impact of financial hardship on single parents: An exploration of the journey from social distress to seeking help. Fam Econ Issues, 39(2). https://doi.org/10.1007/s10834-017-9551-6

Socioeconomic status (SES) refers to the position of a person or family in society. Low SES is an indicator of increased needs due to the impact on education, basic needs, and health; it is also connected to higher psychological stress and poorer health outcomes.[2] Figure 4 provides a visual of the socioeconomic status index within the region. Significant disparities exist throughout the region, with all socioeconomic statuses experienced. Atkinson, Auburn, Bedford, and Windham are the only towns with all communities experiencing the highest level of socioeconomic status in the region.
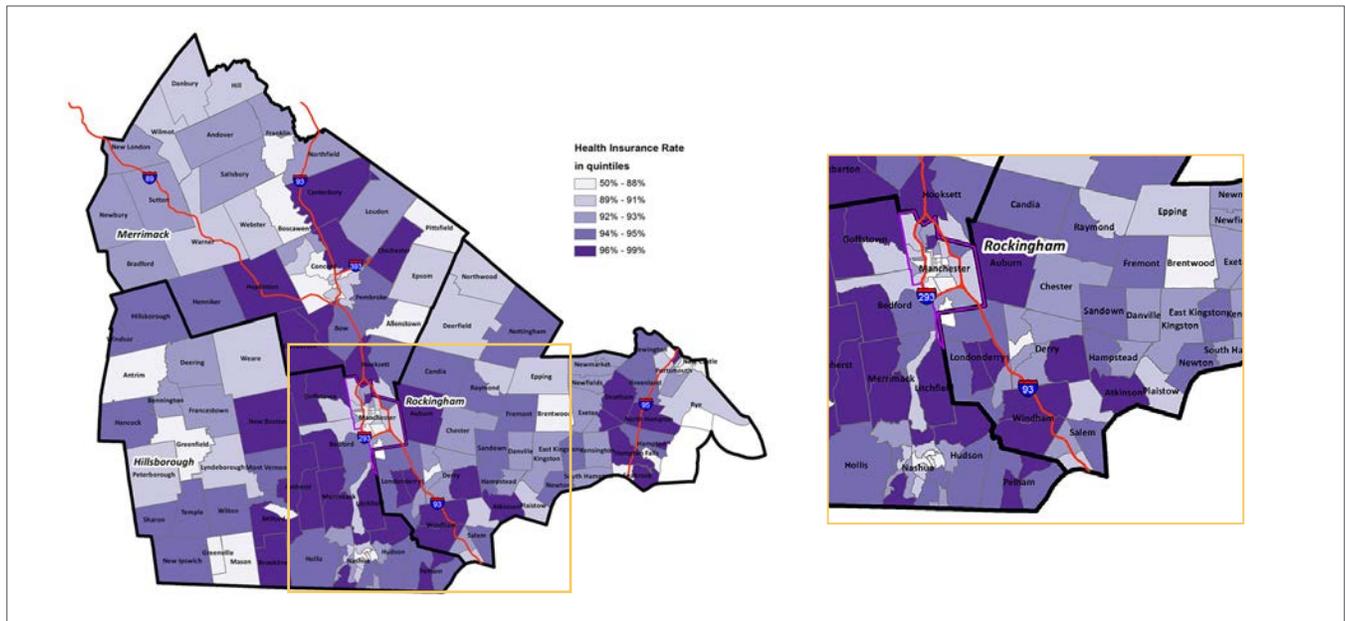
Figure 4: Socioeconomic Status in Region 4

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2   American Psychological Association (2010). Children, youth, families, and socioeconomic status. Retrieved from https://www.apa.org/pi/ses/resources/publications/children-families#:~:text=Lower%20SES%20has%20been%20linked,%2C%20%26%20Yunis%2C%202004

Lack of health care access and health insurance is an indicator of high family needs. Studies show that if a parent or caregiver does not have health care, the child(ren) are likely to also not be enrolled in health care.[3] In combination with other factors, families that do not have access to health care or health insurance may have increased stress, poorer physical health, and more mental health challenges.[4] The majority of Region 4 residents fall between the second and fifth quintile (88% - 99%) in the region for health insurance rates. However, there are communities within Derry and Manchester that score on the lowest quartile (50% - 88%) or health insurance rate, which may indicate a high need for supports and services.

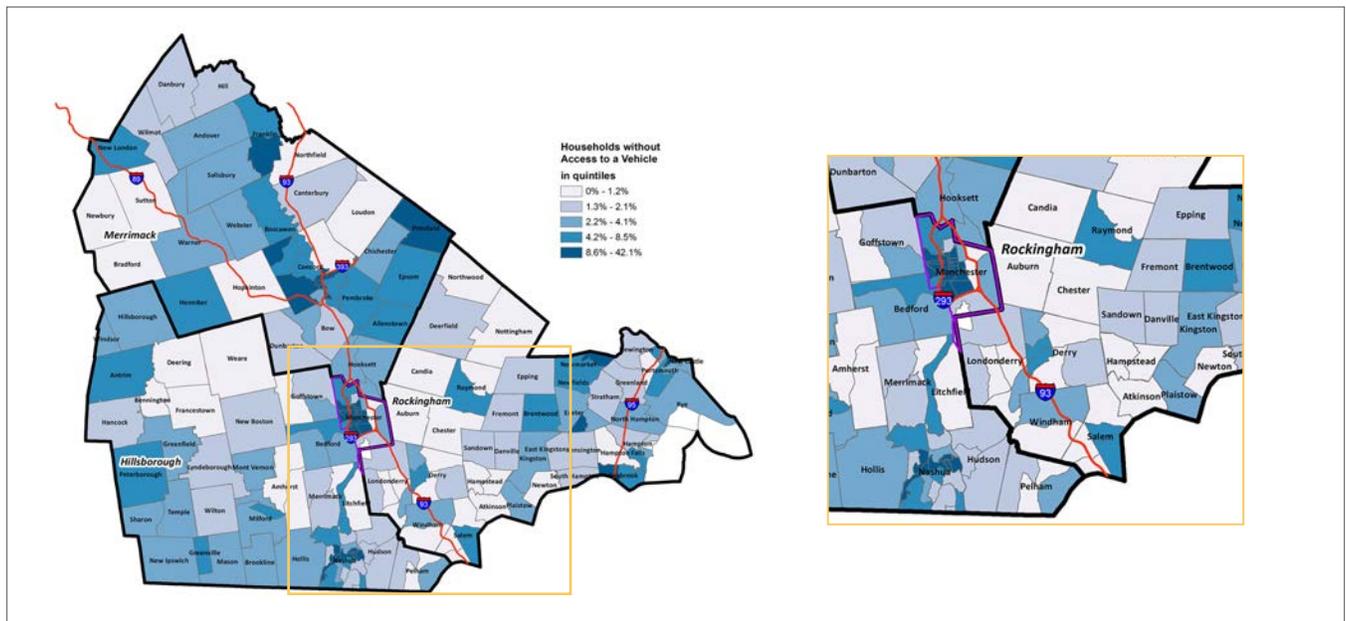*Figure 5: Health Insurance Coverage in Region 4*

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3   Institute of Medicine (US) Committee on the Consequences of Uninsurance. (2002). Family well-being and health insurance coverage. In, Health Insurance is a Family Matter. National Academy of Sciences.

4   Ibid

Access to a vehicle allows a family to travel for jobs and other economic opportunities, child care, food, health care, and other services and supports they may need. Six towns within the region score within the first quintile (0% - 1.2%) of households without access to a vehicle. Across the remaining communities, there are significant differences. For example, one community within Manchester has the most households without access to a vehicle (8.6% - 42.1%), and the neighboring Manchester community has the least amount of households without access to a vehicle (0% - 1.2%).
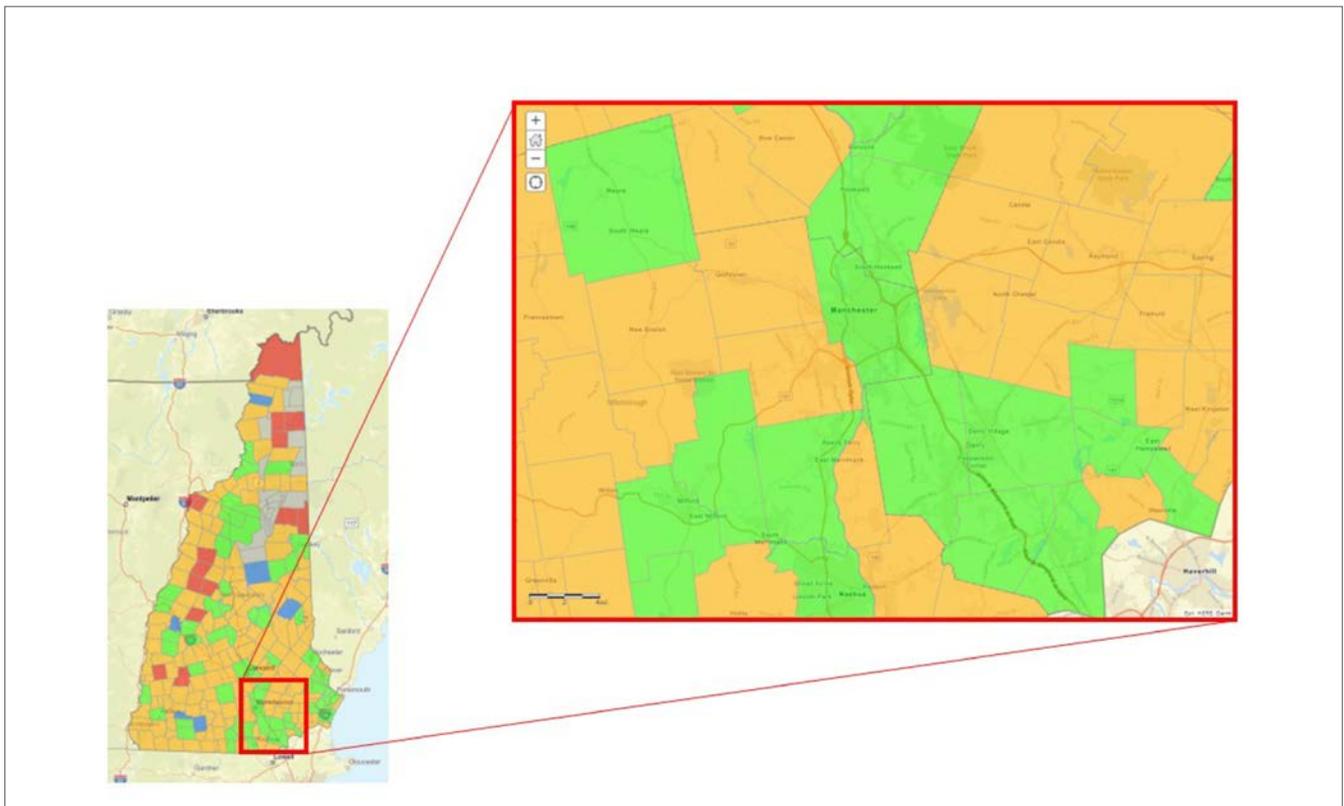
Figure 6: Households Without Access to Vehicle in Region 4

Access to quality child care contributes to a coordinated, family-focused, mixed-delivery system. Figure 7 illustrates Region 4's level of access to licensed child care programs. Atkinson, Auburn, Bedford, Candia, Chester, Danville, Goffstown, and New Boston have low (below median access) scores compared to the state. The remaining communities have moderate (above median access) scores. While these mapping data help illustrate the potential for child care access, it is important to note that it does accurately reflect the number of available slots. Given the child care workforce shortage, many classrooms are closed, and programs have long waitlists, especially for infant and toddler slots.

Figure 7 SEQ Figure * ARABIC 7: Access to Licensed Child Care in Region 4

Region 4 is home to four Family Resource Centers (FRC), as shown in Figure 8. While the services vary across FRCs, they all seek to strengthen families by promoting health, wellbeing, self-sufficiency, and positive parenting through support and education.

Figure 8 SEQ Figure * ARABIC 8: Family Resource Centers in Region 4

The Division for Children, Youth, and Families (DCYF) manages protective programs on behalf of New Hampshire's children and youth and their families. DCYF staff provide a wide range of family-centered services to meet the needs of parents and their children and strengthen the family system. Three DCYF offices serve Region 4. The Manchester office serves the City of Manchester. The remaining Region 4 communities are served by the Southern District Office in Nashua and the Concord District Office.

III. PRIORITIES, GOALS, AND RATIONALES

Informed by data, the Region 4 Leadership Team developed three priority focus areas — Equitable Early Childhood System, Engagement Across Sectors, and Regional and Statewide Connections.

Priority Area 1: Equitable Early Childhood System

Current data shows Region 4 has diverse populations in terms of race, ethnicity, access to services, language, and family structure. For Region 4's youngest residents to achieve their full potential and thrive in their communities, they must have access to an equitable early childhood system that serves all children and families. To develop and ensure an equitable early childhood system, Region 4 identified the following goals and rationales.

Goal 1.1: Provide training and technical assistance to help early childhood providers collect data on race, ethnicity, gender, sexual orientation, and financial status.

RATIONALE:

- Collection of demographic data varies across the region; without accurate demographic data, Region 4 cannot assess needs within the early childhood system.

- Many professionals are uncomfortable asking people about race, ethnicity, gender, sexual organization, and financial status and need tools and support to learn how to ask questions.

- Best practices and training programs have already been developed to help people with demographic data collection; Region 4 can leverage existing resources.

Goal 1.2: Increase awareness among early childhood partners about the diversity of the population across Region 4

RATIONALE:

- Poverty rate varies widely within Region 4. Living in poverty is associated with food and housing insecurity and reduced access to high-quality health care. Awareness of these differences and indicators will allow communities to better serve families.

- Region 4 is home to 43,741 residents who identify as persons of color. Racial health disparities are a significant barrier to maintaining quality of life for communities of color, with structural racism negatively impacting health, transportation, education, employment, income, environment, and housing.[5] Awareness of this growing population and associated indicators within the region will help Region 4 implement diverse, equitable, and inclusive strategies.

- 36,250 residents in Region 4 speak a language other than English at home. Increasing awareness of this population will allow Region 4 to implement culturally and linguistically appropriate strategies to serve the families within the region.

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5   Center for Disease Control and Prevention. (2022). Racism and Health. CDC. Retrieved from https://www.cdc.gov/healthequity/racism-disparities/index.html

Goal 1.3 Promote Diversity, Equity, Inclusion, and Belonging (DEIB) tools and resources for use by early childhood partners across Region 4

RATIONALE:

- DEI is based on the principles of diversity (involving people with a range of social identities), equity (creating systems that ensure equal access), and inclusion (ensuring all voices are heard).

- DEIB recognizes that although diversity, equity, and inclusion are essential, promoting a sense of belonging enables positive outcomes for everyone.

- The shift from DEI to DEIB has been highlighted as a growing trend in 2022; being diverse, equitable, and inclusive is not enough to create an environment that helps people get the best out of themselves — they also need to feel that they belong.

PRIORITY 1: EQUITABLE EARLY CHILDHOOD SYSTEM				
Goal	**Action Steps**	**Timeline**	**Who**	**Measure of Success**
Goal 1.1: Provide training and technical assistance to help early childhood providers collect data on race, ethnicity, gender, sexual orientation, and financial status.	Identify training programs and best practices for demographic data collection	2022-2023	LAUNCH Pad Coordinators	Training programs and curricula have been identified
	Providing training and technical assistance to early childhood providers to help them with demographic data collection	2022-2023	LAUNCH Pad Coordinators	# of professionals/ early childhood providers that participate in training; # of training sessions conducted
Goal 1.2: Increase awareness among early childhood partners about the diversity of the population across Region 4	Utilize regional data to understand current trends across the Region as well as specific communities	2023-2024	LAUNCH Pad Coordinators	Data is compiled
	Disseminate regional demographic information through information sessions with Region 4 partners	2023-2024	LAUNCH Pad Coordinators	# of information sessions held; # of participants who attend information sessions
Goal 1.3: Promote Diversity, Equity, Inclusion, and Belonging (DEIB) tools and resources for use by early childhood partners across Region 4	Identify existing DEIB tools being used, examined, and the current needs.	2023-2024	LAUNCH Pad Coordinators	DEIB tools are identified
	Promote utilization/adoption of tools and best practices across Region 4 through emails,social media posts, and LAUNCH Pad meetings	2023-2024	LAUNCH Pad Coordinators	# of outreach activities to promote tools and best practices

Priority Area 2: Engagement and Relationship Building Across Sectors

A whole family, whole-child approach considers all aspects of their ecosystem, including education, child care, mental health, health care, transportation, and more. There must be engagement and relationships across all sectors to support the children and families in Region 4. Region 4 identified the following goals and rationales to achieve this vision.

Goal 2.1: Identify early childhood partners not currently engaged in systems-building work

RATIONALE:

- While many families interact with multiple service sectors (i.e., health care, mental health, child care, schools), these systems do not always work together to coordinate services for children and families.

- Collaboration partners bring sector-specific priorities and mandates; there is great value in the complementary resources and capabilities that cross-sector partners bring to the Regional work.

- Engaging early childhood partners will help promote collaboration and improve the integration and efficency of the child-serving systems.

Goal 2.3: Inform and engage all potential early childhood partners about Region 4 systems-building activities

RATIONALE:

- Partners are likely to commit to collaboration when the goals align with their own.

- As the collaboration works to develop its shared vision, partners should be encouraged to communicate their differing priorities openly and honestly.

- The collaboration can surface shared agreement and mutual benefit areas, building a solid foundation for its work.

Potential Early Childhood System Sectors

- Behavioral Health/Substance Use Disorders
- Business
- Child Welfare
- Community Action Programs
- DHHS Division of Children, Youth, and Families (DCYF)
- Early Learning Centers/Childcare Centers
- Faith Community
- Family Resource Centers
- First Responders (police, fire, EMT)
- Head Start/Early Head Start
- Health Care
- Higher Education
- Home Visiting/Early Supports and Services
- Libraries
- Philanthropy
- School Districts
- Town Welfare/Municipalities
- United Ways WIC

PRIORITY 2: ENGAGEMENT AND RELATIONSHIP BUILDING ACROSS SECTORS

Goal	Action Steps	Timeline	Who	Measure of Success
Goal 2.1: Identify early childhood partners not currently engaged in systems-building work	Prioritize the list of potential partners to engage	2022-2023	Region 4 Leadership Team	Partners are identified
	Develop relationships with new partners to enhance Region 4 early childhood system	2022-2023	Region 4 Leadership Team	# of new participants in LAUNCH Pads; # of new participants in Region 4 Leadership Team
Goal 2.2: Inform and engage all potential early childhood partners about Region 4 systems-building activities	Host information sessions on Region 4/LAUNCH Leadership Team to inform potential partners about the work and opportunities for engagement	2023	Region 4 Leadership Team	# of information sessions held; # of participants at information sessions

Priority Area 3: Communication and Coordination

Effective, impactful, and equitable early childhood solutions cannot be built in silos. Coordination and communication are essential for enhancing community, regional, and statewide early childhood systems. Region 4 has developed the following goals and rationales to foster communication and coordination.

Goal 3.1: Create and participate in formal and informal communication channels to promote systems building across regions

RATIONALE:
- NH DHHS and DOE prioritized the development of a statewide regional early childhood system that would enhance ECCE-school-family support collaborations and partnerships at the local, regional, and state levels.
- The regional model aims to create a collaborative, unified, and inclusive system through new and expanded partnerships that engage all community partners and work on behalf of all families.

Goal 3.2: Share and adopt best practices and lessons learned for early childhood systems improvement

RATIONALE:
- The statewide regional system aims to Improve and strengthen state-regional connection and communication and reduce gaps and duplication in and between regions.
- Initiatives are happening in other regions that address similar needs Region 4; no need to duplicate efforts.

- Region 4 has a diverse population of families and stakeholders and can inform and disseminate best practices to other regions with similar needs, partners, and populations.
- Statewide initiatives that could support/inform regional efforts.

Goal 3.3: Develop action plans for the Greater Derry and Greater Manchester LAUNCH Pads to carry out Region 4 strategic plan goals

RATIONALE:
- Alignment at the sub-region level will enhance the overall Regional early childhood system while allowing communities to best serve their constituents.
- A tailored community-level action plan can increase buy-in and engagement at the local level.

PRIORITY 3: COMMUNICATION AND COORDINATION				
Goal	Action Steps	Timeline	Who	Measure of Success
Goal 3.1: Create and participate in formal and informal communication channels to promote systems building across regions	Attend NH Alliance of Regional Early Childhood Coalitions meetings	2022-2024	Region 4 Leadership Team	# of meetings attended
	Attend Technical Assistance sessions hosted by PDG	2022	Region 4 Leadership Team	# of meetings attended
	Participate in monthly check-in with PDG liaison for bi-directional communication	2022	Region 4 Leadership Team	# of meetings attended
Goal 3.2: Share and adopt best practices and lessons learned for early childhood systems improvement	Create and disseminate an e-newsletter for Region 4 participants	2022-2024	Region 4 Leadership Team	# of e-newsletters distributed; # of contacts on the distribution list
	Share Region 4 Leadership Team information at the LAUNCH Pads	2022-2024	LAUNCH Pad Coordinators	# of LAUNCH Pad meetings
Goal 3.3: Develop action plans for the Greater Derry and Greater Manchester LAUNCH Pads to carry out strategic plan goals	Develop Greater Derry LAUNCH Action Plan	2022-2023	LAUNCH Pad Coordinator	Action Plan is developed
	Develop Greater Manchester LAUNCH Action Plan	2022-2023	LAUNCH Pad Coordinator	Action Plan is developed

IV. IMPLEMENTATION AND MONITORING

Upon formal approval of the Strategic Plan by the Region 4 Leadership Team, the Strategic Plan document will be shared with statewide partners, funders, and the LAUNCH Pad Coordinators.

Aligning with strategic planning best practices, the Region 4 Leadership Team will regularly monitor the implementation of the Strategic Plan and progress toward strategic plan goals. While much of the work will be carried out at the sub-region level through the Greater Manchester and Greater Derry LAUNCH Pads, the Region 4 Leadership Team will review progress quarterly. Monitoring progress will allow the Region 4 Leadership Team to celebrate its accomplishments and provide an opportunity to course-correct should the need arise.