



CUSP Network
Member Highlight:
MASSACHUSETTS

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Massachusetts' Comprehensive Approach to Pre-K Expansion

In January 2024, Governor Maura Healey introduced the “Gateway to Pre-K” agenda, pledging universal, high-quality preschool access for four-year-olds in all 26 Gateway Cities by the end of 2026. This ambitious initiative aims to offer low or no-cost enrollment opportunities for families, ensuring children are well-prepared for kindergarten.

The Department of Early Education and Care (EEC) has leveraged the Comprehensive Unified Service Platform (CUSP) from Third Sector Intelligence (3Si) to drive this expansion effort effectively:

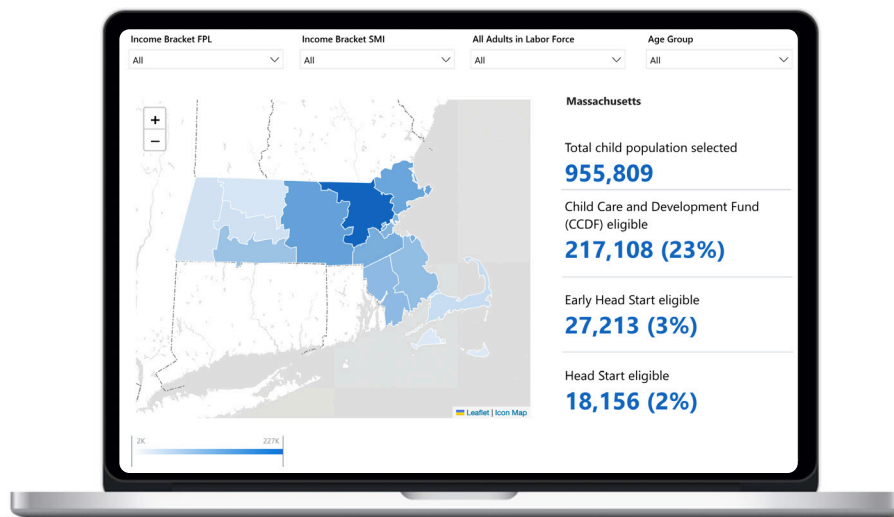
Strategic Data-driven Planning and Implementation

EEC utilizes CUSP’s integrated view of supply and demand to:

1. Assess baseline service levels in Gateway Cities.
2. Identify gaps and project expansion needs to achieve universal Pre-K access.
3. Optimize resource allocation and guide expansion strategies.

Commonwealth Preschool Partnership Initiative (CPPI) Expansion

The CPPI is crucial to achieving the Gateway to Pre-K goals. It funds districts to develop partnerships between school districts and local early education programs, expanding access to high-quality preschool. Leveraging CUSP, the EEC has streamlined the CPPI grant application process by equipping 31 districts with essential information on community demographics, demonstrating how CUSP can be effectively used to drive comprehensive pre-K expansion efforts. CUSP’s strategic support of the Gateway to Pre-K initiative combined with its operational support of CPPI expansion constitute a data driven approach to improving early childhood education access across the state.



Enhancing Equity in Early Education and Care

(Re-procurement of Subsidy Provider Contracts and Child Opportunity Index Integration)

The Massachusetts Department of Early Education and Care (EEC) is using data-driven strategies to drive equity in early education and care, leveraging Third Sector Intelligence (3Si) analytics to identify and support communities with the greatest needs. Two key initiatives illustrate their comprehensive approach to improving the state's ability to allocate resources effectively and equitably in early education and care: re-procurement of subsidy provider contracts supported by the Childcare Development Fund (CCDF) and the integration of the Child Opportunity Index (COI).

Re-procurement Process Enhancement

EEC completed a re-procurement process for its CCDF-funded subsidy provider contracts, the first since 2009, to ensure that contracted slots are awarded to providers best positioned to fill geographic service gaps. 3Si's Child Universal Success Platform (CUSP) enabled the department to analyze providers' proximity to "access deserts," creating a metric for evaluating their ability to address existing service gaps.

Child Opportunity Index Integration

To broaden its assessment of community needs, EEC incorporated the Child Opportunity Index (COI) into its decision-making process. CUSP supported the initiative by integrating the index with EEC's existing data and making use of it at numerous geographic units of analysis. The COI, developed by diversitydatakids.org, measures neighborhood conditions affecting children's well-being across education, health, environment, and socioeconomic domains.

Key features of the COI:

- Provides data at the census tract level, allowing for detailed geographic analysis.
- Includes 44 indicators across various domains crucial to child development.
- Offers annual data from 2012 to 2021, ensuring up-to-date information.

- Incorporates new indicators such as broadband access and social capital.
- Utilizes census block-level data for increased precision.

Outcomes and Benefits

By combining these approaches, Massachusetts has achieved several important outcomes:

1. **Enhanced Equity Focus:** The integration of COI data allows EEC to make decisions with a stronger emphasis on equity, considering a wide range of environmental factors that influence child development.
2. **Improved Resource Allocation:** EEC can now assess providers' need for state support, including financial assistance, based on a more comprehensive set of criteria. The state can also better prioritize its program investments in subsidized childcare to eligible, unserved populations.
3. **Data-Driven Decision Making:** The CUSP database enables seamless integration of COI data with other relevant information, facilitating more informed policy decisions.
4. **Long-term Impact Assessment:** The COI's ability to predict long-term outcomes in health and economic mobility provides valuable insights for strategic planning.

This holistic approach demonstrates Massachusetts' commitment to leveraging data and advanced analytics to identify and support communities with the greatest needs, ultimately working towards more equitable access to quality early education and care across the state.