

Washington Early Learning State and Local Coordination Project

FINAL REPORT AND RECOMMENDATIONS

Of Project Steering Committee

As Adopted by the Washington Early Learning Partnership

June 2013

Note: The Washington Early Learning Partnership adopted recommendations in this report in June 2013. The Partnership expresses its appreciation to the Project Steering Committee, which developed the recommendations, and to everyone who offered advice and ideas through the Project's public review process.

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A Message from the Washington Early Learning Partnership

In the past 10 years our state has made major advances in early learning. Washington is now recognized as a national leader in developing an early learning system. Even so, there is a long way to go before *all* young children in our state have the opportunities and support they need to be healthy, capable and confident in school and in life.

Our three organizations—the Department of Early Learning, the Office of Superintendent of Public Instruction and Thrive by Five Washington—joined together in 2009 to develop a strong, comprehensive early learning system for all children in Washington, birth through age eight. Since then, we have: adopted a 10-year *Washington Early Learning Plan*; secured a \$60 million Race to the Top: Early Learning Challenge federal grant; adopted the *Early Learning and Development Guidelines*; and created the beginnings of a regional structure where child care providers, teachers, parents and other partners come together to improve early learning opportunities and share information.

The recommendations from the Washington Early Learning State and Local Coordination Project, which we jointly sponsored, identify the next big steps to strengthen our state’s early learning system. The recommendations are the result of the project’s nationwide best practices research, the dedicated work of a 29-member statewide steering committee, the Early Learning Advisory Council, 150 stakeholders who participated in interviews, more than 300 people who provided comments, and a cultural competency review. This research and advice helped us to identify the barriers that prevent us, individually and collectively, from providing the best opportunities we can for our children. The project also revealed many opportunities to do better. The recommendations make use of these ideas and build on the strengths of the families, professionals and organizations across the state that care for and nurture young children, and help them to learn.

The recommended actions will: increase the connections and enhance coordination across state and regional levels and across disciplines; create more and better ways to share information; and ensure that the early learning system is meeting the needs of children and families across the state.

We hope you will join with us and with people in your community in this effort. Together, we can work to make sure every child in our state is healthy, capable and confident in school and in life.

Yours truly,



Bette Hyde
Director
Dept. of Early Learning

Randy Dorn
Superintendent of
Public Instruction

Nina Auerbach
CEO
Thrive by Five Washington

Acknowledgments

This *Final Report and Recommendations* of the Washington Early Learning State and Local Coordination Project represents the results of a 16-month process of listening, learning, discussing, trying out ideas, getting feedback, and developing plans. Much appreciation goes to all who participated in this project. The groups who gave generously of their time, talent and good thinking include the following:

Project Steering Committee:

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Rep. Larry Haler (Washington State House of Representatives)
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Cynthia Juarez (Educational Service District 105)
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Lois Martin (American Federation of Teachers/WEEL, Community Day Center for Children, Inc.)

Sandy Nelson (Educational Service District 113)
Mary Perkins (early childhood consultant)
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Sue Winn (family child care provider)

150 stakeholders who participated in interviews

173 people who offered comments in Round 1 public engagement

223 people who offered comments in Round 2 public engagement

Staff Team:

Department of Early Learning: Kelli Bohanon, Deanna Stewart, Nancy Vernon
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I. EXECUTIVE SUMMARY

Purpose

Washington has set a powerful vision for an early learning system that spans care, education, services and supports for families and children from prenatal care through 3rd grade:

In Washington, we work together so that all children start life with a solid foundation for success, based on strong families and a world-class early learning system for all children prenatal through third grade. Accessible, accountable, and developmentally and culturally appropriate, our system partners with families to ensure that every child is healthy, capable and confident in school and in life (Vision Statement, *Washington Early Learning Plan*).

Improved state and local coordination (Early Learning Plan Strategy #34) is a key to achieving this vision. Four decades of science show that children’s earliest experiences influence their lifelong learning and development. Many individuals, organizations, government agencies and professions help to care for, nurture and educate young children.

What is needed now is to increase the connections across state and regional levels and across disciplines, create more and better ways to share information, and ensure that the early learning system is meeting the needs of children and families. The goal is to build an early learning system that can offer children what they need when they need it, based on child and family requirements, and available resources.

Cosponsors and Steering Committee

To address this need, the Washington Early Learning Partnership formed the State and Local Coordination Project. The partnership’s members—the Washington State Department of Early Learning (DEL), the Office of Superintendent of Public Instruction (OSPI), and the public-private partnership Thrive by Five Washington (Thrive)—cosponsored the project. A project Steering Committee was created to guide the project, and which served as a subcommittee of the Early Learning Advisory Council (ELAC). The Steering Committee’s 29 members represented different areas of the state and the range of agencies, organizations and professions involved with early learning.

Methodology

Community research. The project undertook community and national research to better understand and find ways to improve the early learning system in Washington. This research consisted of the following elements.

- **Current system.** The project developed a diagram that reflects how coordination of the early learning system currently works in Washington.
- **National best practices.** The project reviewed how other states coordinate early learning, focusing on three states considered to have best practice models: North Carolina, Arizona and Oklahoma. All three have a state-level organization (in different forms—one is a public agency,

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one a nonprofit and one a public-private partnership), with boards appointed by the Governor and/or Legislature, plus local or regional groups (nonprofits or coalitions).

- **Early learning system functions.** The project reviewed early learning system functions and decided to use the six essential functions of an effective early learning system identified by the national BUILD Initiative in a 2011 review of collaborative leadership and accountability structures.¹ These functions are: (1) set standards, goals and outcomes; (2) set priorities and choose strategies; (3) ensure funding and policy support; (4) implement and expand services and programs; (5) build public understanding and public will; and (6) be accountable for achieving outcomes.
- **Stakeholder interviews.** The project interviewed 150 stakeholders in Washington about the challenges for early learning coordination, and their aspirations and ideas for strengthening the coordination of early learning programs and services in our state. The individuals interviewed represented a balance of people who work at the state level and local levels, in a variety of early learning fields.

Key barriers and opportunities. From this community research, the project developed a needs assessment with summary lists of the key barriers to and opportunities for improving coordination. The project defined “barriers” as what makes it hard to find and use early learning services and programs, and “opportunities” as what can help to improve state and local coordination of services and programs.

Key Barriers to Coordination of Early Learning Services	
Capacity Barriers	Coordination Barriers
1. It is hard for families to access the services they need.	1. It is hard for families to find information and to “navigate” the system.
2. There are not enough providers for some types of services.	2. The transition from early learning to elementary school is tough for families.
3. There are not enough people who meet professional standards in some parts of the state and in some communities of color.	3. Some communities, such as rural areas and refugee and immigrant communities, are isolated and have unique challenges.
4. Too few early learning and K-12 teachers have the preparation and tools to support children's learning in developmentally and culturally competent ways.	4. Too few state and local leaders and providers know about programs, issues and plans outside their program “silos.”
	5. There is not enough two-way communication and planning between the state and local communities.
	6. There are no common measures of program, system and child outcomes that both the state and local communities use to show value and focus improvements.
	7. Agencies use different geographic boundaries for their initiatives.

¹ Karen Ponder, “Building Early Childhood Systems: The Collaborative Leadership and Accountability Model” (BUILD Initiative), August 2011. Web address: http://www.del.wa.gov/publications/elac-qris/docs/WA_Collaborative_Leadership_brief.pdf

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Key Opportunities To Improve Coordination of Early Learning Services	
1.	Create an easy way for all families to learn about and access early learning, family support and health services.
2.	Engage and empower the families and communities whose children are experiencing the greatest disparities to help plan services, and to monitor progress and results.
3.	Promote early learning partnerships that can coordinate local early learning efforts in every part of the state.
4.	Create intentional, formal connections and two-way communication between state and regional coordinating bodies.
5.	Strengthen state-level coordination of early learning, family support, health, and child welfare services across agencies and organizations.
6.	Create a consistent, single place for community and school leaders to learn about planned and new state initiatives.
7.	Select a handful of meaningful goals and indicators to monitor progress and results for young children and their families statewide and locally.
8.	Create state and local continuous quality improvement (CQI) processes to understand what is and is not working well, and identify ways to improve services and systems.
9.	Create a consistent framework and universal values to guide the development of new initiatives and system building efforts.
10.	Provide more opportunities that set statewide funding goals and accountability measures and allow the flexibility for communities to tailor implementation plans to meet local needs.
11.	Promote public awareness of early learning's importance and strengthen public will to support children's success.

Communication and public engagement. The project partners shared information as the project progressed and engaged the public in shaping the recommendations. Communication included a project webpage on DEL's website and emailed updates. The project offered two opportunities for review and comment:

- **Engagement on barriers and opportunities.** The project posted on DEL's website the lists of key barriers and opportunities, along with a survey for comments. The 175 responses came from people across the state who held a variety of early learning roles. More than 85 percent rated the lists as describing the barriers and opportunities "well" or "very well." Major themes in written comments included: the need to address many challenges to accessing services; the importance of raising public awareness of early learning's importance; and the importance of addressing the needs of the state's diverse populations. Comments also urged building on what is working; seeking partnerships; and allowing local flexibility to implement programs.
- **Engagement on preliminary recommendations.** The second public comment opportunity focused on the Steering Committee's preliminary recommendations. A total of 223 people responded to the comment survey. A strong majority said the proposed changes would be effective in improving state-local coordination of early learning. They gave the highest ratings to recommendations: (1) for ELAC to adopt an annual work plan; (2) to increase stakeholder engagement, and (3) to gain agreement on a handful of statewide performance goals.

Cultural Competence Review

To ensure that the coordination structure and methods recognized the diversity of communities in the state, the project sponsors asked the National Equity Project to conduct formal cultural competence reviews of the project. The National Equity Project provided this review at two points in the project. The first review was early in the project, and focused on the methodology and approach to engagement and communication. The second took place after the Steering Committee developed preliminary recommendations. The first review recommended: scheduling cultural competence review meetings at key steps in the project; and using more inclusive language. The Steering Committee and project team took action to follow these recommendations. Recommendations from the second review included: aligning with the work underway by Thrive by Five and early learning stakeholders to create an Racial Equity Theory of Change (RETOC) for early learning; and including examples of racial disparities, using examples from the stakeholder interviews and public engagement, to keep a focus on racial equity in the recommendations. The Steering Committee and project team incorporated these suggestions into the project's final recommendations.

Final Recommendations

Based on the public review comments, the State and Local Coordination Steering Committee developed the project's final recommendations.

OVERARCHING RECOMMENDATIONS

Recommendation 1. Adopt a stakeholder engagement framework for major policy and programmatic issues.

- Engage stakeholders at major decision points to provide decision makers with insight and information, promote collective understanding, and build momentum for specific goals or strategies.
- Use a two-part framework consisting of: (1) three stakeholder-engagement processes with different levels of intensity and reach; and (2) a set of six questions to help agencies determine which process to use.

Recommendation 2. Adopt a handful of performance goals and indicators to help state and regional partners work together, and focus on the same strategic objectives and desired outcomes.

- Agree on a handful of measurable performance goals focused on: the quality, cultural competence and effectiveness of services; advancing important system improvements; or directly boosting results for children.
- Use performance goals to: monitor progress toward the goals; understand issues of equity of access, program quality, and outcomes for children; build statewide and regional capacity; and conduct continuous quality improvement.

RECOMMENDATIONS FOR COORDINATION AT EACH SYSTEM LEVEL

State-Level Coordination: Washington Early Learning Partnership

Recommendation 3. Invite the Department of Health (DOH) and Department of Social and Health Services (DSHS) to participate in the Washington Early Learning Partnership with DEL, OSPI and Thrive.

Recommendation 4. Continue to create annual priority strategies, and develop a process for consultation with ELAC and Regional Coalitions.

Recommendation 5. Continue to enhance the two-way communication among Washington Early Learning Partnership members and regional early learning partners. Create a calendar of current and upcoming state-level initiatives and actions that will have an impact on local stakeholders.

State-Regional Coordination: Early Learning Advisory Council

Recommendation 6. Strengthen ELAC’s advisory function in the early learning system by making it a forum for state and regional partners to: (a) share information about needs and plan improvements; (b) inform decisions in meaningful ways; and (c) promote joint actions that cross-sector partners can take to improve services and results for our state’s rich diversity of children and families.

- Enhance ELAC’s advisory relationship so that ELAC advises DEL, and on issues of common interest and, as agreed, other Washington Early Learning Partnership agencies.

Recommendation 7. Clarify how ELAC will carry out these more focused functions by: (a) developing guiding documents that describe ELAC’s structure, charter, ground rules, and members’ roles and responsibilities; (b) developing an annual ELAC work plan; and (c) instituting these functions and processes.

- Create a clear charter, ground rules, member roles and responsibilities, and hold a periodic assessment of ELAC’s effectiveness, and of what went well and what could be improved.
- Create a committee structure, with charters for each committee (an Executive Committee, with other committees based on work plan priorities).
- Hold six four- to six-hour regular meetings per year. Hold special meetings as needed.
- Enhance communication between meetings.
- Create an annual work plan.
- Provide an orientation for new members.

Recommendation 8. Expand ELAC membership to include representation of each Regional Coalition and deepen connections to statewide associations representing key early learning fields.

- Expand from 23 to 33 members by designating and adding seats for representatives from each of the 10 Regional Coalitions and the Early Learning Action Alliance.
- Ensure that all ELAC members are affiliated with statewide networks and associations, Regional Coalitions, or Washington Early Learning Partnership agencies.

Note: This is the one area where the recommendations adopted by the Washington Early Learning Partnership differed from the Project Steering Committee recommendations. The Steering Committee had recommended two additional ELAC members not included in these final recommendations, one each representing Child Care Aware and Early Childhood Comprehensive Systems (ECCS).

Regional Coordination: Regional Coalitions Recommendations

Recommendation 9. Continue to strengthen the effectiveness and durability of Regional Coalitions.

- Continue integration of the Infant Toddler Regions and Regional Coalitions.
- Create guiding documents and other mechanisms to ensure: clear decision-making and communications processes, broad agreement, and effective implementation.

Recommendation 10. Increase engagement of diverse regional stakeholders.

- Identify the types of engagement opportunities to use to engage different types of stakeholders.
- Assess current outreach efforts to different cultural, income-level and geographically remote communities.
- Cultivate advocates, funders and policymakers.
- Raise parent and public awareness about regional priorities, initiatives and services.

Recommendation 11. Strengthen joint regional and state action to achieve common goals.

- Create simple regional action plans to implement prioritized strategies and strengthen joint local, regional and state action to achieve common goals.
- Provide a voice for regional stakeholders, including families and parents, through participation in ELAC.

Conclusion

The recommendations for state and local coordination in this report can result in important benefits for children and families. Ultimately:

- Families and those working at the local and regional levels will have a consistent voice in shaping early learning policies and programs.
- People will join together in their region to understand their needs, learn from each other, and find ways to improve early learning opportunities for all children.
- People from all regions of the state and those at the state level will work together to close the opportunity gap for young children.
- All children will have what they need for healthy development and learning at every step from prenatal through 3rd grade.

Implementation Plan

The Steering Committee has suggested a plan to implement the State and Local Coordination Project recommendations. Before this plan becomes final, the implementing entities will need to discuss and refine specific implementation details to ensure that the particular situations of each are met. Final implementation plans will be negotiated with members of the Washington Early Learning Partnership to ensure quick and effective action.

The Implementation Plan describes how the different levels of the early learning system (state, ELAC, regional) connect, suggests the steps to take, and provides an idea of the resources needed for short-term action and long-term capacity. The plan provides an overall schedule, with actions to take in the near-term (one to two months), mid-term (three to six months) and long-term (seven months or longer). Following are the action steps suggested to implement each recommendation.

Stakeholder engagement (Recommendation 1):

1. Develop protocol to implement the stakeholder engagement framework (mid-term).
2. Use existing work planning processes to identify the type of stakeholder engagement to use with different projects (near-term).

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3. Develop project plans for stakeholder engagement, based on work planning decisions (mid-term).
4. Conduct stakeholder engagement process (mid-term and ongoing).
5. Communicate decisions to stakeholders (ongoing).

Performance goals (Recommendation 2):

1. Develop draft goals and indicators (mid-term).
2. Gather comments and input from affected stakeholders (mid-term).
3. Prepare final recommendations (long-term).
4. Decide on and communicate the Statewide Performance Goals and Indicators (long-term).
5. Utilize a simple CQI process to review progress toward meeting performance goals (ongoing, with reports twice a year).

Washington Early Learning Partnership (Recommendations 3 – 5)

Invite DOH and DSHS to join Early Learning Partnership (Recommendation 3):

1. Invite DOH and DSHS leadership to participate in the partnership (near-term).
2. Involve DOH and DSHS leaders and directors as appropriate for the work (mid-term).

Continue annual priorities and develop consultation process with ELAC (Recommendation 4):

1. Develop process for engaging ELAC and Regional Coalitions in review and comment on partnership annual priorities (mid-term).

Enhance communication between Washington Early Learning Partnership and regional and local early learning partners (Recommendation 5):

1. Create an online tool for posting current and future statewide initiatives and actions (mid-term).

Early Learning Advisory Council (Recommendations 6 – 8)

Strengthen ELAC's advisory function in the early learning system (Recommendation 6):

1. Adopt the Recommendations (near-term).
2. Confirm the ELAC staffing configuration and operations budget (near-term).

Clarify how ELAC will carry out focused functions (Recommendation 7):

1. Create an Ad Hoc Transition Committee (mid-term).
2. Create initial ELAC Work Plan (mid-term).
3. Develop Council Charter, Ground Rules, Member Roles and Responsibilities (mid-term).
4. Create the New Member Orientation Process (mid-term).
5. Hold a Transition Retreat (mid-term).
6. Institute strengthened functions and processes (mid-term).

Expand ELAC membership (Recommendation 8):

1. Define the interim "Regional Advisor" role and the support needed (near-term).
2. Invite coalitions to identify a Regional Advisor to participate in ELAC (near-term).
3. Use the recommended nominations and appointments process to identify new members as terms for existing members expire (mid-term).

4. Amend ELAC Authorizing Legislation to expand membership and further specify ELAC's roles (mid-term).

Regional Coalitions (Recommendations 9 – 11)

Strengthen Regional Coalitions (Recommendation 9):

1. Work with state-level partners to create a stable funding source for coalition capacity (ongoing).
2. Establish a well-understood and accepted regional governance structure (near-term).
3. Ensure skilled and credible leadership (near-term and ongoing).
4. Ensure credibility, relevance, and needed expertise and infrastructure (mid-term and ongoing).

Increase engagement of diverse stakeholders (Recommendation 10):

1. Articulate ways, in addition to membership, that parents, businesses, elected officials, and other interested parties can share their voice and affiliate with the coalition (mid-term).
2. Engage communities of color in regional initiatives (mid-term and ongoing).
3. Engage other communities that are far from opportunity (mid-term and ongoing).
4. Engage people who make and influence decisions in the breadth of program areas that make up the region's early learning system (long-term and ongoing).
5. Raise public awareness of and participation in regional and state initiatives (such as Infant Toddler support, Early Achievers, WaKIDS, Love.Talk.Play., etc.) (long-term and ongoing).

Strengthen joint local, regional and state action (Recommendation 11):

1. Ensure a transparent, effective and aligned process for agenda setting (near-term).
2. Implement prioritized strategies through use of an *Action Plan* (mid-term).
3. Select and support a regional advisor to participate in the Early Learning Advisory Council (ELAC) (near-term).
4. Promote use of statewide performance goals to assess how well we are doing in coordinating action and delivering results (mid-term, depending on state process).
5. Establish/strengthen advocacy capacity (mid-term and ongoing).

II. PURPOSES OF PROJECT

In Washington, we work together so that all children start life with a solid foundation for success, based on strong families and a world-class early learning system for all children prenatal through third grade. Accessible, accountable, and developmentally and culturally appropriate, our system partners with families to ensure that every child is healthy, capable and confident in school and in life.

Vision Statement, *Washington Early Learning Plan*

Washington’s 10-year *Early Learning Plan* sets forth a vision for working together so all children can be healthy, capable and confident in school and in life. Our state’s early learning system, prenatal through 3rd grade, partners with families to work toward this vision. Working together successfully requires coordination of services and programs so that they meet the needs of children and families, are easy for families to find and use, and work together to get better results. The *Early Learning Plan* includes a strategy (#34) related to coordination: “Build statewide infrastructure for partnerships and mobilizations.” This improved coordination infrastructure is also key to the success of a number of other plan strategies. These include: “Build a continuum of infant and toddler services and programs” (#4); “Ensure developmental screening” (#6); and “Align prekindergarten and K-3 instructional and programmatic practices” (#27).

“I think we as a state are well on our way to make lasting improvements coordinating the many facets that contribute to quality early childhood education.”

Quote from Round 2 survey responses

Policy makers at the state and federal levels have also recognized the importance of coordination among services and programs, and among state and local efforts. The state legislation for the Early Learning Advisory Council (ELAC) and the federal Head Start Act both require improved coordination of the early learning system. (See Appendix A for ELAC’s authorizing language and Appendix B for the Head Start Act section about State Advisory Councils.)

Many individuals, organizations, government agencies and professions help to care for, nurture and educate young children. In addition, many people and organizations have worked hard over the last decade to build a connected early learning system from prenatal through 3rd grade. The pieces of the system are in place in Washington and working well on an individual basis. What is needed now is to increase the connections across state and regional levels and across disciplines, create more and better ways to share information, and ensure that the early learning system is meeting the needs of children and families across the state.

“When parents contact one agency they hear, ‘No, we don’t do that, you’ll have to contact agency Y.’ They have to be very determined and persistent to get help.”

Quote from stakeholder interviews

The Washington State Department of Early Learning (DEL), the Office of Superintendent of Public Instruction (OSPI), and the public-private partnership Thrive by Five Washington (Thrive) formed the Washington Early Learning State and Local Coordination Project to get a better understanding of these

challenges and to seek solutions. The project’s purpose is to identify a structure that can bring the *Early Learning Plan* vision into reality. The ultimate goal is to improve the lives of young children and families.

III. METHODOLOGY

Groups Guiding the Project

Steering Committee. A 29-member, statewide Steering Committee guided the State and Local Coordination Project’s work, participated in the research steps, and shaped the recommendations. The members (see list below) represented the range of agencies, organizations and professions involved with early learning, and came from different areas of the state. The Steering Committee, a subcommittee of ELAC, met in person or by conference call 13 times between March 2012 and April 2013.

Table 2. Steering Committee Members

Name	Title	Organization	Location
Angela Abrams	Early Learning Quality Improvement Coordinator	Educational Service District 105	Yakima
Bianca Bailey	Member	ELAC	Ellensburg
	Member	DEL Parent Advisory Group	
	Board of Directors	Bright Beginnings of Kittitas County	
Jody Becker-Green	Senior Director of Planning, Performance and Accountability	Department of Social and Health Services	Olympia
Kelli Bohanon	Assistant Director	Department of Early Learning	Olympia
Elizabeth Bonbright	Executive Director	Child Care Aware of Washington	Tacoma
Paula Bond	Principal	Geiger Montessori School	Tacoma
Samantha Bowen	Director of Early Learning	Educational Service District 123	Pasco
Molly Boyajian	Director of Policy and Community Partnerships	Thrive by Five Washington	Seattle
Bob Butts	Assistant Superintendent for Early Learning	Office of Superintendent of Public Instruction	Olympia
Annette Dieker	ECCS Program Manager	Washington State Department of Health	Olympia
Leslie Dozono	Early Learning Policy Director	Children's Alliance	Seattle
Yolanda Esquivel	Center Director	WSMC - College Place Child Development Center	Walla Walla
Kathy Goebel	Associate Director	Washington State Board of Community and Technical Colleges	Olympia
Debbie Ham	Director	SELF	Vancouver
Lauren Hipp	Policy Manager	Thrive by Five Washington	Seattle
Sage MacLeod	ECEAP Coordinator	San Juan ECEAP	Eastsound
Lois Martin	Member	ELAC	Seattle
	Member	AFT/WEEL Organizing Committee	
	Director	Community Day Center for Children	
Judy Nelson	Customer Experience Manager – Youth	Pierce County Library System	Tacoma

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Name	Title	Organization	Location
Sandy Nelson	Member Assistant Superintendent, Early Learning	ELAC Educational Service District 113	Tumwater
Erin Okuno	Program Officer	Foundation for Early Learning	Seattle
Deeann Puffert	Chief Executive Officer	Child Care Resources	Seattle
Shanthi Raghu	Teacher Education Center Coordinator	University Child Development School	Seattle
Shaine Schramling	Program Manager, First Teacher and Parenting Matters Programs	Parenting Matters Foundation	Bainbridge Island
Sandra Szambelan	Director, Center for Early Childhood Services	Educational Service District 101	Spokane
Rebecca Timmen	Project LAUNCH State Coordinator/ Early Childhood Comprehensive Systems Coordinator	Prevention and Community Health Division, Department of Health	Tumwater
Nancy Vernon	Program Administrator, SLC, ELAC, I/T Regional Systems & Services	Department of Early Learning	Olympia
Karen Walker	Program Administrator, Early Support for Infants and Toddlers Program	Department of Early Learning	Olympia
Sue Winn	Co-Chair Family Child Care Provider	ELAC The Pumpkin Patch Childcare	LaConner
Susan Yang	Program Manager	Foundation for Early Learning	Seattle

Early Learning Advisory Council (ELAC). ELAC, in its role of making recommendations to DEL, has guided the State and Local Coordination Project by establishing as a subcommittee the project’s Steering Committee. Seven of the Steering Committee members were also ELAC members. ELAC provided full group review and comment throughout the project, with briefings at nine ELAC meetings between December 2011 and April 2013. ELAC approved the preliminary recommendations for public review, and the final recommendations for this report.

Partnership Group. The Washington Early Learning Partnership members (DEL, OSPI and Thrive) cosponsored and made decisions related to the project. The partnership’s representatives for the project included: Nina Auerbach (Thrive by Five Washington), Bob Butts (OSPI), and Bette Hyde (DEL).

Staff Work Group. Staff representing the partnership members met regularly with the consultant team to provide advice and guidance throughout the project. They reviewed and commented on documents, and provided advice on agendas for the Steering Committee and ELAC. The staff work group members included: from DEL – Kelli Bohanon, Nancy Vernon and Deanna Stewart; from Thrive – Molly Boyajian and Lauren Hipp; and from OSPI – Bob Butts.

Consultant team. The project consultant team included Cedar River Group, Dovetailing and Tu Consulting, all located in Seattle. The National Equity Project, located in Oakland, California, conducted the project’s cultural competency review.

Guiding Principles

The Steering Committee adopted the principles below in July 2012 to guide its work. These principles add to the *Early Learning Plan* “Guiding Principles for Development of Washington’s Early Learning System,” which are the foundation for this project’s recommendations. See Appendix C.

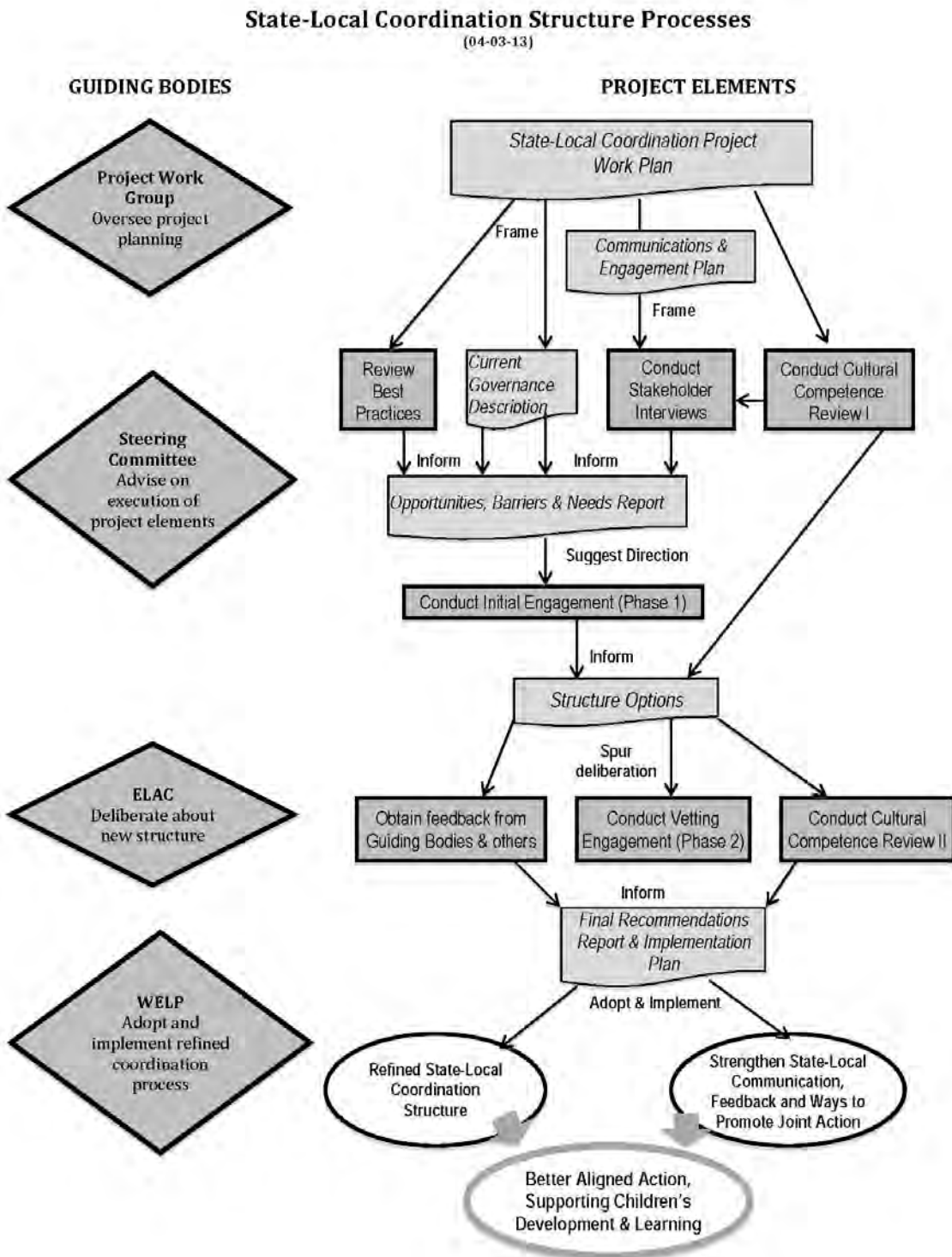
Principles To Guide Development of the State and Local Coordination Structure

1. **Has high potential to increase benefit and improve outcomes.** Offers great value for children and families. The benefits are worth the cost.
2. **Improves effectiveness and efficiency.** Helps programs be more effective, simpler and more efficient. Helps to align programs and systems with each other. Streamlines policy and regulation. Ensures that policies work for Washington’s diverse communities and cultures.
3. **Promotes use of data to improve accountability and program quality.** Encourages programs and services to set goals and make decisions based on data. Promotes using that data for continuous quality improvement and to encourage innovation.
4. **Advances equity and raises the bar.** Advances racial and income equity. Reduces gaps in services. Engages the voices of the parents and communities whose children have the least access to opportunity.
5. **Is doable, feasible and builds on strengths.** Builds on existing efforts. Offers a feasible path to carry out the change. Will have positive effects and is likely to succeed. Has or can attract funding for state and local infrastructure.
6. **Uses the power of combining state guidance with local flexibility.** Sets statewide outcomes and parameters, and relies on local communities to tailor the specifics to their needs. Promotes accountability at all levels.
7. **Solidifies and accelerates gains.** Creates structures where people can work together to create visible results, boost gains and build a platform for future action. Aligns efforts from prenatal through 3rd grade and across systems. Advances high quality in services, supports and education. Uses public and private resources from the state and from local communities to reinforce one another.
8. **Fosters high-performing state and local partnerships that work together to improve results.** Creates clear two-way communication between state and local partners, with regular opportunities to give/get feedback. Promotes accountability and transparent decision-making. State partners seek and value local voice and influence in setting statewide policy and priorities. Local partners work together to advance statewide priorities and goals.
9. **Brings the right people to the table at all levels.** Engages people who can make things happen statewide and locally. Engages families and communities in decision-making, especially those with the greatest need for services.
10. **Creates momentum.** Engenders broad support and builds public will.

“Bringing more people to the table that more fully represent the state and the needs of the people will provide a more accurate picture of the challenges. It will also allow for more accurate information to be exchanged.”

From Round 2 survey responses

Figure 1. Project Processes



Project Elements

Figure 1 on the previous page shows the structure and elements of the project. Sections IV through IX below provide details about the project's community research, two rounds of public engagement, cultural competence review, and development of the recommendations.

Public Inclusion and Communication

The project partners were committed to sharing information about the project as the work progressed and engaging the public in shaping the recommendations. The project developed a Communications and Engagement Strategy (see Appendix D) with the goals of sharing information widely and seeking public comment at key points. The steps were as follows:

- **Web page.** Created a project web page on DEL's website. The web page explained the project's purpose, linked to key documents and offered opportunities to comment.
- **Round 1 and Round 2 Engagement.** There were two rounds of public engagement. The first asked for review of the community research and lists of barriers and opportunities. The second asked for review of the Steering Committee's preliminary recommendations. See Sections VI and VIII below.
 - **Notices about the public review** and invitations requesting public comment were shared in a number of ways. These included: mailing to two DEL listservs; posting in DEL's monthly newsletter, Facebook page and Twitter feed; direct invitations from Steering Committee members to their individual networks; email to 131 key organizations and individuals in communities of color; and briefings at relevant meetings and events when feasible. Additionally, the first round of engagement included email invitations to the 150 contacts interviewed during the community research phase of the project. The second round of public engagement included email invitations to those who had commented in round 1, and had provided contact information so as to receive updates about the project. (See Section VI Round 1 Public Engagement, and Section VIII Round 2 Public Engagement for more about the public review process and results.)
 - **Engagement materials** were provided online through a Survey Monkey link and electronically as fillable forms that could be emailed back, or printed out, completed in hard copy, and returned by fax or mail. Materials were translated into Spanish, and were available in other languages by request. A packet to support facilitation of group discussions was provided to Steering Committee members for use in group settings.
- **Project update emails.** The project sent update emails to DEL's listserv, to key contacts in communities of color, to those who participated in the project's stakeholder interviews, and to those who responded to the comment opportunities and asked for updates. The topics of the updates were: (1) the project and its purpose, schedule and process (sent in March 2012); (2) results of first round of public comment (September 2012); and (3) results of the second round of public comment (February 2013). In addition, there will be an update when the project's final recommendations and implementation plan are available.

IV. COMMUNITY RESEARCH

The project undertook community research to better understand the early learning system in Washington and how it might be improved. This research consisted of: (1) developing a diagram of Washington’s current early learning system; (2) researching national best practices for early learning coordination and the functions of an early learning system; (3) interviewing stakeholders in Washington to learn more about the challenges for early learning coordination and ideas for solutions; and (4) using the best practices review and interviews to create a needs assessment in the form of a list of barriers and opportunities to improve coordination.

Current Coordination Structure

The project’s first task was to describe the common understanding of how coordination of early learning currently works. The consultant team developed a graphic of Washington’s current early learning system. The project Steering Committee, ELAC, members of the public who attended ELAC meetings and four state agencies provided comments, which were then incorporated into the graphic. See Appendix E.

National Best Practices Review

The project reviewed how other states coordinate their early learning system to gather ideas and lessons learned. This research had two objectives:

- Gather information and lessons learned from other states about their state and local early learning coordination structures and methods.
- Gather information about what elements of coordination have resulted in improvements in child outcomes, in program effectiveness and efficiency, and in maintaining and expanding state and local funds for early learning.

“There must be someone who stays awake at night thinking about the big picture.”

From Best Practices research report

Karen Ponder of the BUILD Initiative (a national organization that helps states build comprehensive early childhood systems) provided information about six states that have had formal state and local coordination structures in place long enough to have a track record and have made changes/improvements over time. The Steering Committee recommended focusing on three states—North Carolina, Arizona and Oklahoma—that have received national recognition for creating different aspects of “best practice” models for coordination. The consulting team reviewed print and online materials, and interviewed one key leader from each of the three states. See Appendix F for the full summary of the best practices research.

The project found that North Carolina, Arizona and Oklahoma have the same focus in coordinating early learning: early care and education, family support, and health systems. Each is mandated to focus on prenatal or birth to 5 years old or kindergarten entry. Each also has a well-developed system for coordinating state efforts with a network of local partnerships.

However, in other ways, the three states take different approaches. North Carolina and Arizona both have state-level organizations—North Carolina’s a nonprofit (called Smart Start) and Arizona’s a public agency (called First Things First). Both have boards appointed and controlled by the Governor and Legislature. Both state-level agencies allocate significant funding to local communities. In North Carolina funds go to local partnerships, each a private not-for-profit organization, which are accountable for funding decisions and outcomes. In Arizona, local partnerships assess needs and make funding recommendations to the state-level organization, which makes funding decisions and is accountable for outcomes. Oklahoma’s structure is a little different, with a public-private board appointed by the Governor and called the Oklahoma Partnership for School Readiness, which coordinates at the state level. This board is staffed by a nonprofit, called Smart Start Oklahoma.

“Durable leadership structures for collaborating at the state and local levels must become part of the fabric of the early learning system.”

From Best Practices research report

On the local level, North Carolina has a network of 77 private, nonprofit, local Smart Start partnerships. The state-level Smart Start connects with these local groups. Arizona has 31 regional councils of volunteers (rather than nonprofits), which are staffed by the state-level First Things First. Oklahoma has 18 local coalitions called Smart Start Communities, which cover 52 of the state’s 77 counties.

The State and Local Coordination project also asked leaders from the three states for the key lessons they have learned in creating a structure to coordinate state and local early learning programs and services. They offered the following lessons:

1. **Leadership structure.** Building a system and integrating its parts is complex and takes time. Durable leadership structures for collaborating at the state and local levels must become part of the fabric of the early learning system. A solid leadership structure is key for withstanding changes in leadership and overcoming resistance to change.
2. **State-level coordination.** A state coordinating body should include: (a) all the state-level agencies that manage significant parts of the early learning system; (b) representatives of local partnerships; and (c) other key partners.
3. **Place for big-picture discussion.** There must be a “place” to have important conversations about improving systems and outcomes. Children need it all, not just family support, health or education. When programs are in silos and unconnected, children fall through the cracks.
4. **Local collaborations.** Strong local collaborations enable partners to interact with one another and with state agencies in consistent and meaningful ways. These collaborations are essential to building a family-centered early learning system, improving outcomes and boosting public will.
5. **Staffing.** Both local partnerships and state level coordination need staffing to be effective. There must be sufficient resources to support the state and local coordination infrastructure.
6. **Continuous improvement.** A culture and practice of continuous improvement and innovation is essential to improving services, and making the system more effective and efficient.
7. **Performance goals.** State and local partners need to agree on a limited number of statewide performance goals to track. By doing so, they can hold one another accountable, know what data to collect, and create continuous quality improvement.
8. **Two-way communication.** State-local communication and opportunities to give and get feedback are vitally important. Communication and feedback help to: (a) keep people at local and state levels informed and engaged; (b) surface challenges and opportunities; and (c) create

a sense of identity in the larger effort. Communication is key to building and sustaining a connected state-local early learning system that gets results for children.

Early Learning System Functions

From the national BUILD Initiative², the best practices research and other sources, the project identified six essential functions of an early learning system, shown in the table below. Agencies/organizations at each level of the early learning system may carry out some of the same functions, but will have different roles in that work.

Table 3. Essential Functions of an Early Learning System

Function	Description
1. Set Standards, Goals and Outcomes.	Includes assessing needs and assets, and setting standards, goals, and the desired outcomes for early learning services and programs.
2. Set Priorities and Choose Strategies.	Involves setting priorities and choosing strategies to meet the goals, setting guidelines for carrying them out, and learning from experience with strategies and programs.
3. Ensure Funding and Policy Support.	Involves understanding the level of support needed, securing funding from a variety of sources, and gaining decision-makers' support.
4. Implement and Expand Services and Programs.	Involves choosing services and programs to meet identified needs, deciding how to implement and scale up, and identifying opportunities to expand.
5. Build Public Understanding and Public Will.	Involves public awareness and education activities, cultivating champions, and working with advocates and other partners.
6. Be Accountable for Achieving Outcomes.	Includes gathering data, conducting evaluation, conducting quality improvement processes, and reporting results.

Stakeholder Interviews

Between March and June 2012, the consultant team interviewed 150 stakeholders statewide (34 individuals and 17 focus groups involving 116 people). Twenty-five percent of the individual stakeholders interviewed were people of color. The purposes were to develop a clear understanding of how stakeholders perceive the current practices for early learning coordination, and to learn their aspirations and ideas for strengthening the state and local coordination of early learning programs and services in our state. The people interviewed represented a balance of those working at the state level and those at the local level, and many of the fields involved in early learning prenatal through 3rd grade. Since the State and Local Coordination Project was focused on systems development, the interviews included parents and child care providers, but primarily focused on state and local early learning leaders. The team aimed for diversity by geographic location, community size and race/ethnicity.

“Local entities need to drive design of what will work best in their communities.”

From stakeholder interviews

Themes from these interviews included the following:

² Karen Ponder, “Building Early Childhood Systems: The Collaborative Leadership and Accountability Model” (BUILD Initiative), August 2011, 8-9; http://www.del.wa.gov/publications/elac-qris/docs/WA_Collaborative_Leadership_brief.pdf

- **Coordination efforts that work well.** Groups that many interviewees mentioned as being effective in bringing people in early learning together to share information and resources were: the Early Learning Coalitions; Infant-Toddler Regions; state and county Interagency Coordinating Councils; the Washington State Association of Head Start and Early Childhood Education and

“Previously there was nothing to connect to, but now there is with the Washington Early Learning Plan and the Early Learning Partnership.”

“Just because children don’t meet the eligibility threshold for services doesn’t mean they don’t have needs.”

“It’s hard for Spanish-speaking parents to find out about and apply for subsidies, and to find Spanish-speaking providers.”

“Parents don’t feel they have any voice. The people making the policies aren’t visible and don’t ask for families’ input.”

“When the systems begin to work together, like food benefits using the same documentation as child care assistance, then we will know it is working better.”

From stakeholder interviews

Assistance Program (ECEAP); the Starting Strong Conferences; and local community collaborations. They found the processes for developing the *Early Learning Plan* and the *Early Learning and Development Guidelines* to be good examples of involving interested people and welcoming input. They said that Child Care Aware agencies, Educational Service Districts (ESDs), the Foundation for Early Learning, WithinReach, the online Washington Connection, and licensing staff are good at offering connections to information and resources. They found Thrive by Five’s and DEL’s email updates, and ESD’s monthly telephone calls to be effective communication methods.

- **Not working or missing.** Frequent comments about what is not working included the following. Agencies seem to work in silos. There are gaps in access and services. There are many barriers for parents to find and use services. There is a need for parent engagement. There are language and

cultural barriers to accessing services. More early intervention services are needed and better transitions between services. There is sometimes confusion at the regional and local levels about policy changes and new initiatives.

- **Ideas to improve state and local coordination.** Interviewees offered a number of ideas for facilitating local work; clarifying state and local roles; working cross-sector; increasing two-way communication; providing opportunities to share information; involving parents; increasing culturally competent practices; coordinating decision-making; and developing a continuous quality improvement process.

See Appendix G for the interview questions and a full summary of the stakeholder interviews.

Barriers and Opportunities

Based on the project’s community research, the Steering Committee developed lists of key barriers and opportunities. As used here, “barriers” are what makes it hard to find and use early learning services and programs, and “opportunities” can help to improve state and local coordination of services and programs. The project identified two types of barriers. One was barriers of capacity, such as lack of funding, staff or resources. The other was coordination barriers, such as lack of connections between services. The tables below provide the lists of key barriers and opportunities.

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Table 4. Key Barriers to Coordination of Early Learning Services

Capacity Barriers	Coordination Barriers
1. It is hard for families to access the services they need.	1. It is hard for families to find information and to “navigate” the system.
2. There are not enough providers for some types of services.	2. The transition from early learning to elementary school is tough for families.
3. There are not enough people who meet professional standards in some parts of the state and in some communities of color.	3. Some communities, such as those in rural areas and, or refugee and immigrant communities, are isolated and have unique challenges.
4. Too few early learning and K-12 teachers have the preparation and tools to support children’s learning in developmentally and culturally competent ways.	4. Too few state and local leaders and providers know about programs, issues and plans outside their program “silos.”
	5. There is not enough two-way communication and planning between the state and local communities.
	6. There are no common measures of program, system and child outcomes that both the state and local communities use to show value and focus improvements.
	7. Agencies use different geographic boundaries for their initiatives.

Table 5. Key Opportunities To Improve State and Local Coordination of Services

Key Opportunities
1. Create an easy way for all families to learn about and access early learning, family support and health services.
2. Engage and empower the families and communities whose children are experiencing the greatest disparities to help plan services, and to monitor progress and results.
3. Promote early learning partnerships that can coordinate local early learning efforts in every part of the state.
4. Create intentional, formal connections and two-way communication between state and regional coordinating bodies.
5. Strengthen state-level coordination of early learning, family support, health, and child welfare services across agencies and organizations.
6. Create a consistent, single place for community and school leaders to learn about planned and new state initiatives.
7. Select a handful of meaningful goals and indicators to monitor progress and results for young children and their families statewide and locally.
8. Create state and local continuous quality improvement (CQI) processes to understand what is and is not working well, and identify ways to improve services and systems.
9. Create a consistent framework and universal values to guide the development of new initiatives and system building efforts.
10. Provide more opportunities that set statewide funding goals and accountability measures and allow the flexibility for communities to tailor implementation plans to meet local needs.
11. Promote public awareness of the importance of early learning, and strengthen public will to support children’s success.

V. FIRST CULTURAL COMPETENCE REVIEW

One of the State and Local Coordination Project's goals was to ensure that the coordination structure and methods will recognize the diversity of communities in the state in ways that enable those who are furthest from opportunity to participate. To work toward this goal, project sponsors DEL, OSPI and Thrive asked the National Equity Project to provide formal cultural competence review. The National Equity Project conducted this review at two stages of the project: the process for community research and the preliminary recommendations.

The first cultural competence review took place in the spring of 2012 while the stakeholder interviews were underway. The review addressed two questions:

1. Is the project process/structure set up in a way that will be sensitive to issues of racial and cultural equity? Are there any improvements you would suggest?
2. Is the approach to engagement and communication designed to capture issues regarding racial and cultural equity? Are there any improvements you would suggest?

For this review the National Equity Project used the Racial Equity Theory of Change (RETOC) tool that early learning stakeholders in Washington have created. The reviewers found that the project's overall process, and communications and engagement plan would enable using a "racial equity lens" to identify how the current system contributes to disproportionate or racialized outcomes. They define a "racial equity lens" as a way to uncover the structure, policies and behaviors that sustain unequal outcomes for children. The reviewers found the stakeholder interview process to be "very generic," that is, the same for everyone, rather than adjusted to call out racial, cultural or geographic differences. However, they found that the public engagement tracking instrument had the potential to map the interaction of race and geography in the state.

"Will the intention of greater aligned action result in structures that support greater access to early learning for children furthest away from opportunity?"

National Equity Project, Cultural Competence Planning and Review

The reviewers recommended: (1) scheduling cultural competence review meetings at key steps in the project's work; (2) discussing how each guiding body for the project might share responsibility for holding a racial equity lens, and share documents or processes that would help carry forward attention to racial equity; (3) creating a separate version of the stakeholder interview questions for parents; and (4) using more inclusive language.

In response, the Steering Committee and consultant team took the following actions:

- Raised questions of racial equity in discussions with ELAC, the Steering Committee, the staff work group, and partnership members regarding the guiding principles, preliminary recommendations, and the other project elements.
- Ensured that notices about opportunities to comment were sent to a list of key organizations and individuals in communities of color.
- Worked to reflect the appropriate use of language suggested by the National Equity Project, for example by using such words as "inclusion" or "engagement" instead of "outreach."

The focus groups and interviews were already completed, so there was not an opportunity to create separate sets of questions. However, those conducting the interviews had individualized the discussions within the framework of the interview questions so as to get to issues of racial equity.

See Appendix H and Appendix I for the National Equity Project’s full cultural competence review and the response from the State and Local Coordination Project consulting team.

VI. ROUND 1 PUBLIC ENGAGEMENT

The project’s first round of public engagement took place between June 21 and August 3, 2012. The project posted on DEL’s website the lists of key barriers and opportunities to a strong early learning system that the Steering Committee developed. As noted above in the description of the project’s communication and engagement work, DEL sent notices to multiple email lists to invite people to review and comment on the project’s findings so far. The project sponsors encouraged everyone reviewing the summary to offer their own comments using an online survey form linked from the webpage.

Who Responded

There were a total of 175 responses to the survey: 174 from individuals and one from an organization. Respondents were from across the state, with the largest number from the Northwest and Southeast regions. Respondents who identified their primary early learning roles were fairly evenly distributed among roles. The top three roles (50 or more respondents each) were “child care and preschool,” “preparation and training of early childhood professionals,” and “advocate or volunteer.” Those who offered their affiliation listed a wide range of organizations. Only 65 respondents (37 percent) provided their race/ethnicity.

They self-identified as follows: 51 Caucasian/white, seven Hispanic, three Asian, two Native American, and two using other race/ethnicity descriptions. The 113 respondents who answered a question about their involvement with specific communities or groups listed a diverse range of perspectives. These included: early learning coalitions and groups; child care and preschool; culturally diverse organizations; government agencies; educational organizations and schools; and community-based groups.

The goal of the project’s public engagement was to hear from people interested in the early learning system, who are involved in the variety of fields that support children’s early learning and health, and who represent Washington’s diversity in geography and in race/ethnicity. The 175 respondents did span the various fields involved in early learning and health, and were geographically diverse. The question about race/ethnicity was voluntary, so it is difficult to know if those who chose to answer reflect the diversity of all respondents.

“There are good programs in place but not enough access for all the families in need.”

“Leverage existing work, and take things to greater scale.”

There is no well articulated mechanism for promoting coordination and collaboration at the local level and between local and state level. Would like to see local coordinating councils, maybe by county, that are composed of all services including special education and that communicate with ELAC.”

“Local control and access is key. Each community is different and the families should be able to access programs that fit them culturally.”

“Develop partnerships with local agencies such as schools and public libraries to offer family-based programs to further early learning.”

From Round 1 survey responses

What Respondents Said

More than 85 percent of the 175 survey respondents rated the lists of key barriers and key opportunities as describing the barriers and opportunities “well” or “very well.” The following are the major themes that emerged from the survey responses and comments:

“Until we as a nation understand the importance of early childhood education for ALL children and help parents understand the importance of their role, the issue of lack of funding will continue.”

“Families aren’t aware that certain programs exist or even what to start looking for.”

“These barriers are found in some communities and not in others. Smaller communities struggle a lot and the families and providers are not being heard.”

“Language barriers are impactful on families and children whose primary language is not English.”

From Round 1 survey responses

- There are many direct service/access challenges. A majority of respondents would like to “create an easy way for families to learn about and access early learning, family support and health services.” More than half of respondents ranked this as one of the top three opportunities.
- The opportunity listed as “promote public awareness of early learning’s importance and strengthen public will” received a high ranking. This suggests that respondents see this work as crucial to serving families better and providing the support needed to enhance funding for early learning.
- There was strong interest in improving the quality and breadth of early learning services to meet the needs of our state’s diverse populations. Respondents said that rural areas, communities of color and multilingual populations continue to experience unique challenges that the current early learning system is not meeting.
- There is high interest in local partnership

opportunities as a means to: better coordinate local and regional activities; create a meaningful local voice in state policies and programs; and strengthen communication.

- Many respondents urged that enhancements to the early learning system build on what is working.
- There is strong support for the state to establish program and funding goals, but to provide some flexibility for implementation at the local level.
- Nearly a quarter of those responding to the survey said they would like to see the state follow up on Key Opportunity 5: “Strengthen state-level coordination of early learning, family support, health and child welfare services across agencies and organizations.”

In addition, some respondents suggested additional barriers and opportunities. The primary themes from those comments were about the need for: additional funding to support families and early learning providers; and improved communication with families, early learning providers, teachers and communities.

See Appendix J for the full summary of results from the survey.

VII. DEVELOPMENT OF PRELIMINARY RECOMMENDATIONS

The Steering Committee used the community research and results of the first public engagement to begin considering options for enhancing state and local coordination that would help everyone who aims to improve children’s early learning and development to strengthen each other’s efforts.

Early learning system. To do this, the Steering Committee looked at structures to connect all parts of the state’s early learning system into a stronger, unified whole. Washington’s early learning system includes a number of independent systems, such as:

- Prenatal care
- Child care and preschool
- Birth to five continuum of services, such as: home visiting; family, friend and neighbor caregivers; and early intervention services
- Kindergarten through 3rd grade
- Indian Tribes and Nations
- Health and nutrition
- Social-emotional development and mental health
- Parent and community partnerships
- Parenting education and resources
- Higher education in child development and early childhood education
- Professional development for early learning professionals
- Child welfare
- Libraries

“Getting all the different agencies working together for the common goal will help us reach more families in our community, to have a stronger VOICE of how important these early years are!”

From Round 2 survey responses

Objectives. At a September 2012 meeting, the Steering Committee developed the following “Objectives for an Effective State-Local Coordination Structure”:

1. Follow the “Principles To Guide Development of the State and Local Coordination Structure,” which the Steering Committee adopted in July 2012, and the Guiding Principles in the state’s *Early Learning Plan*.
2. Use the existing elements of the early learning system, and build on and enhance what is working well. Doing so builds on strengths and can bring positive change more quickly. This was suggested by many people in the stakeholder interviews and online survey.
3. Support state and regional partners in decreasing the “barriers” and taking advantage of “opportunities” for better early learning coordination, as identified in the project’s research, stakeholder interviews and survey responses.
4. Improve coordination among the independent systems that comprise early learning [see list above] at the state and regional levels.
5. Develop and use a handful of statewide goals and measures to: (a) focus state and regional attention to promote quality improvement; (b) improve equity of opportunity; and (c) drive positive change more quickly and efficiently.
6. Involve the Early Learning Advisory Council (ELAC) more effectively in advising on the development of key state policies. This was suggested by the Steering Committee and in the stakeholder interviews.

7. Focus on the three entities in Washington’s early learning system that already have the largest role in coordination. These entities are: at the state level (a) the Washington Early Learning Partnership and (b) ELAC; and at the regional and local level (c) the Early Learning Regional Coalitions.
8. Build on the current Early Learning Regional Coalitions by making these coalitions the regional partners in the state and local coordination system.
9. Build the Plan – Do – Review – Revise continuous quality improvement cycle into the coordination system. Doing so will provide “feedback loops” so that communities can inform policy and system development, as suggested in the *Early Learning Plan*.

Recommendation elements. Based on these objectives, the Steering Committee began framing recommendations in terms of:

- The structures, roles and mechanisms that would improve coordination at three levels:
 - Among state-level agencies and organizations.
 - Between the state and regional organizations.
 - Among local organizations and early learning leaders within regions.
- Three overarching issues:
 - Statewide performance goals to focus statewide and local attention to quality improvement, promote equity of opportunity, and drive positive change.
 - A framework for ongoing stakeholder engagement, to ensure that parents, early learning professionals and local communities have a voice in policies and plans.
 - Methods to improve communication among state and local organizations and ELAC.

VIII. ROUND 2 PUBLIC ENGAGEMENT

Between November 20 and December 21, 2012, the project conducted an online survey about the Steering Committee’s preliminary recommendations for improving state and local coordination. These recommendations were posted on DEL’s website. The agencies sponsoring the project encouraged everyone reviewing the preliminary recommendations to offer comments using an online survey form. There were two options for documents to review: Tier 1, a less detailed overview of the preliminary recommendations; and Tier 2, which included more details about the recommendations. The first question in the online survey asked which version the respondent reviewed, and linked to the appropriate set of questions. Most of the respondents (78 percent) chose to review the more detailed version. See Appendix K for the Tier 1 version of the Preliminary Recommendations, and Appendix L for the Tier 2 version.

Who Responded

There were a total of 223 responses to the survey: 188 from individuals and 35 from a group discussion. Respondents spanned the state, with the largest number from the South Sound and King County. Respondents who identified their primary roles related to early learning were distributed among a range of categories. The top three roles were “licensed child care,” “preschool,” and “advocate or volunteer.” Those who offered their affiliation listed a wide range of organizations.

Sixty (32 percent) of the individual respondents who provided their race/ethnicity self-identified as follows: 48 Caucasian/white, six Hispanic, one Asian American and Pacific Islander, two Native American, one African American, and two multi-racial. In addition, the group discussion included 32 Caucasian, one Native American, one Asian American and one African American participant. The 80 respondents who answered a question about their involvement with particular communities or groups listed a diverse range of perspectives: geographic affiliations, early learning coalitions and groups, child care and preschool, culturally diverse organizations, government agencies, educational organizations and schools, and community-based groups.

What Respondents Said

In general, a strong majority of both Tier 1 and Tier 2 respondents said they believed the proposed changes would be effective in improving state-local coordination of early learning. Some respondents were skeptical about whether the recommendations would make a difference in improving services for children and families. Others expressed concern about implementation of the recommendations. For example, there were concerns about whether sufficient resources would be available, or whether agency leadership would fully support the recommendations.

The following are the major themes that emerged from the survey respondents' comments.

Highest ratings. Average ratings of the specific recommendations were the highest for:

- Adopting an ELAC work plan (3.24 average rating on a 1 to 4 scale where 4 was "very effective").
- Increasing stakeholder engagement (3.21 average rating).
- Adopting a handful of statewide performance goals (3.20 average rating).

The majority also liked the recommendations to: add the Department of Health and Department of Social and Health Services to the Washington Early Learning Partnership; expand ELAC's membership to include representatives of the 10 Early Learning Regional Coalitions; increase two-way communication between the state and regional/local groups; and more clearly define roles.

Other comments. In addition to rating the preliminary recommendations, approximately 28 percent of Tier 1 respondents and 23 percent of Tier 2 respondents added comments to their responses. The themes in these comments were:

"More consistency is needed in rules and regulations to streamline programs; agencies need to be willing to tackle contradictions in RCW and WACs that sabotage a unified approach."

"[Regional coalitions] could be critical piece if effective support is there. Coalitions are made up of community players that have multiple roles, and adding this will need support beyond an annual grant that gets reduced and barely supports the folks that need to be at the table."

"I appreciate very much the Racial Equity work that is being done with the current partnership. I would like to see that resourced and supported at the regional and local level."

"Provide more information to parents and involve them more."

"Up to 40 [for ELAC membership] seems too large to accomplish such a mammoth task."

"Coordination will surely improve with the proposed changes, but I'm not certain that will impact the services children and families receive."

From Round 2 survey responses

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- A few suggestions for additional agencies to add to the Washington Early Learning Partnership, such as the Department of the Blind and the regional Office of Head Start (a federal agency).
- Several suggestions for additional stakeholder representatives to add to ELAC and/or the Regional Coalitions, some of whom are involved already.

“Good start that will be effective if it is a living idea that is adjusted as time goes and need arises to ensure the loop is as effective as planned.”

“How well these changes work all depends on the commitment of the agency members, how supported they are for their participation in this work and the resulting agency response to any recommendations, assignments or requests.”

From Round 2 survey responses

- A few suggestions for ELAC to make its meetings more accessible by varying the locations across the state and/or using technology, such as K-20 webinars.
 - A few respondents urged that all aspects of the system be culturally competent and that representatives of communities of color be consulted.
 - A few concerns that the recommendations seemed agency-driven rather than consumer driven, or were too vague or complex.
 - Several respondents expressed concerns about implementation, such as the orientation needs of new ELAC members and staffing support that Regional Coalitions would need.
- A few suggestions about ways to increase communication between local communities and the state, and ways to increase public awareness about the importance of early learning.

See Appendix M for the full summary of results from the survey.

IX. SECOND CULTURAL COMPETENCE REVIEW

The National Equity Project conducted the second cultural competence review in December 2012 and January 2013. They reviewed: the Steering Committee’s Preliminary Recommendations and several discussion papers leading up to those recommendations; the summary of comments from Round 1 public engagement; and the survey form for Round 2 public engagement. The reviewers again used the Racial Equity Theory of Change (RETOC) as a guide for designing strategies to close chronic racial outcome gaps.

The cultural competency review had three major recommendations:

1. **Look for ways to align with the RETOC Outcome Map.** The reviewers noted that early learning stakeholders convened by Thrive by Five are developing this outcome map, and recommended reviewing it for examples of the racial equity narrative and opportunities for alignment.
2. **Role of racial equity and cultural inclusion.** For racial equity to be an effective priority in the recommended strategies, the final recommendations need to “demonstrate a consistent, explicit narrative on the role of racial

“The ways in which current practices and policies are differently impacting families and communities is essential data for designing strategies that will address racial equity.”

National Equity Project, Cultural Competence Review

equity and cultural inclusion in achieving the state’s early learning goals.” The reviewers suggested including examples of disparities that are strongly tied to differences in opportunity that people of color experience, and the practices, policies and cultural representations that contribute to these disparities. They believe these descriptions will provide the context and give urgency to the recommended building blocks for change, and shed light on the landscape that early learning leaders and stakeholders will need to navigate to effect a change.

3. **Use examples and evidence.** The reviewers recommended that the project keep a focus on racial equity in the recommendations by using examples from the project’s interviews with stakeholders, comments in the two public engagement processes, and available data reports.

See Appendix N for the National Equity Project’s full cultural competence review.

X. FINAL RECOMMENDATIONS

The thousands of partners who created the *Washington Early Learning Plan* identified “Ready and Successful Parents, Families and Caregivers,” and “Ready and Successful Systems and Communities” as two of the four main areas of focus for this roadmap for building the early learning system in Washington. The state-local coordination recommendations in this report directly advance these areas and three of the *Early Learning Plan* strategies:

- **#21 Create Formal Pathways for Parent Participation:** Expand pathways for parents, families and caregivers to participate in early learning program/system design and in shaping policies.
- **#34 Build Statewide Infrastructure for Partnerships and Mobilization:** Build statewide infrastructure to strengthen partnerships, build capacity and broaden reach, and focus local mobilization efforts.
- **#35 Strengthen Public Awareness and Commitment:** Expand public awareness campaigns to deepen the understanding, action and support of local leaders and public to make children a priority.

Four decades of science show that children’s earliest experiences influence their lifelong learning and development. The State and Local Coordination Project’s recommendations aim to build an early learning system that can offer children what they need when they need it, based on child and family requirements, and available resources. We know from a growing body of literature and the experience of 18 states³ that building this coordinated continuum of services for children and families requires connecting state leaders and local communities, cross-sector state and regional planning, two-way communication, coordinated action and decision-making, and using data for continuous improvement. These recommendations aim to create visible, durable and efficient methods to accomplish these ends.

The State and Local Coordination Project Steering Committee’s recommendations are a call to act on this knowledge and to create a better way of working together for children. The recommendations include:

³ Karen Ponder, “Building Early Childhood Systems: The Collaborative Leadership and Accountability Model” (BUILD Initiative), August 2011.

- Two overarching recommendations (stakeholder engagement and performance goals) (Recommendations 1 and 2).
- Recommendations to improve coordination and communication at each level of the early learning system: state, state-regional and regional (Recommendations 3 – 11).

Overarching Recommendations

Stakeholder Engagement Recommendation

Two-way communication

One of the themes that emerged from the project’s public engagement was the importance of creating consistent two-way communication (both giving and getting feedback) among state agencies and regional partners when agencies are developing major policies and programs. This two-way communication is important for setting common direction, building trust and promoting joint action among all of the early learning partners. Two-way communication can also provide opportunities to

“Find a way to help communities understand the changes that are coming, when and why. We want to see the big picture, have a chance to voice our views about what will help our community and what will be harmful, and know what is coming and when. We need to prepare ourselves and our community.”

From stakeholder interviews

gather information about early learning needs and the impact of proposed changes so that we draw from the best of what is happening in our communities. The end result is the formation of policies and programs that meet the needs of our state’s rich diversity of families and communities.

The *Early Learning Plan* Guiding Principles included the need for meaningful stakeholder review and comment on the early learning system’s performance over time. This project’s community outreach found that those involved in previous early learning planning efforts frequently cited successful

experiences collaborating with state agencies. In some instances, stakeholders helped shape recommendations on key issues. For example, a broad range of stakeholders were involved in developing the *Early Learning Plan*, the *Early Learning and Development Guidelines*, and the *Infant and Toddler Interdisciplinary Consultation* plans. However, stakeholders (including members of the Steering Committee) also mentioned some state agency decisions that have a significant impact on local early learning communities in which the communities felt they were not engaged in identifying needs or developing recommendations, which may have resulted in implementation challenges. Steering Committee discussions have confirmed the importance of community voice *and* influence on key early learning decisions.

Advancing racial equity

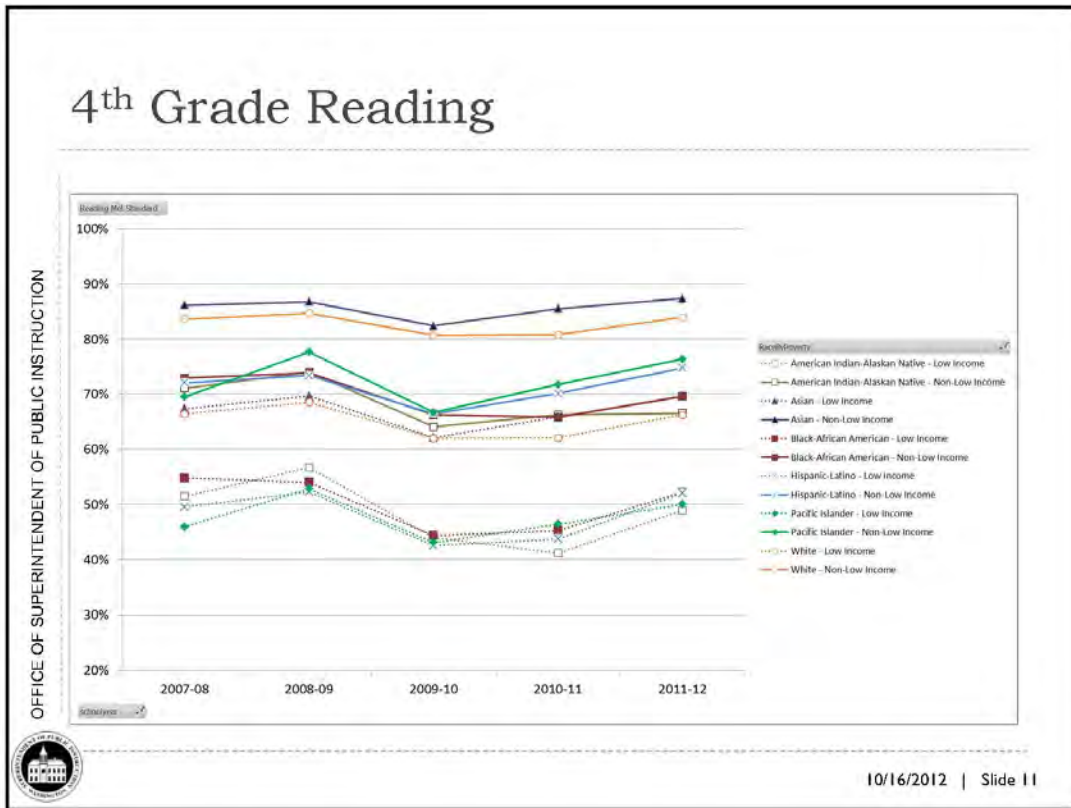
Young children across Washington receive widely differing access to development and learning opportunities from their families, communities, early learning programs and K-12 schools. This difference is called the “opportunity gap.” Figure 2 below, from the *“Closing Opportunity Gaps in Washington’s Public Education System”* (January 2013), shows fourth grade reading scores disaggregated by race/ethnicity and income. This chart illustrates how the opportunity gap results in lower test scores for many children of color and low-income children. It also contributes to higher rates of high school drop-out and lower rates of college completion for

“These educational gaps impose on the United States the economic equivalent of a permanent national recession.”

– *The Economic Impact of the Achievement Gap in America’s Schools*

children of color and low-income children. Thus, the opportunity gap is an important human and economic issue for Washington.

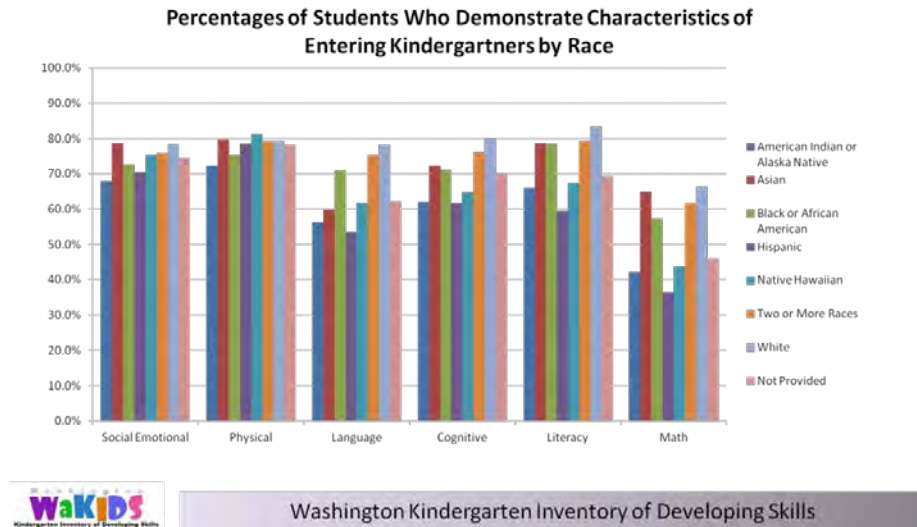
Figure 2. Fourth Grade Reading Scores by Race/Ethnicity and Income



The Fall 2012 WaKIDS data show that the opportunity gap is clear even as children enter kindergarten. Figure 3 below shows Fall 2012 WaKIDS scores by race/ethnicity.

**Figure 3. WaKIDS Fall 2012 Scores by Race/Ethnicity
(N = 21,811)**

The Opportunity Gap is Evident in the First Few Weeks of Kindergarten



The guiding principles the Steering Committee developed for this project included “Advances equity and raises the bar,” and “Engaging the voices of the parents and communities whose children have the least access to opportunity.” The second cultural competence review for this State and Local Coordination Project encouraged alignment of the project’s

“Notably, in some areas, the racial gap has been overcome. For example, Latino students in Ohio outperform white students in 13 other states on the eighth grade NAEP reading test and are seven points ahead of the national average. In Texas, low-income black students have the same average score on the fourth grade NAEP as low-income white students in Alabama.”

The Economic Impact of the Achievement Gap in America’s Schools

recommendations with the recommendations for the Racial Equity Theory of Change (RETOC) for early learning. Thrive by Five Washington has led this venture with the participation of more than 70 government agencies and community-based organizations.

The Advancing Racial Equity in Early Learning work in our state has prepared an “outcome map” describing possible actions to advance racial equity in the design of

early learning systems and services. The State-Local Coordination Project Steering Committee included several of the suggested actions in the recommendations, as follows:

- Invite communities to participate in decisions about defining outcomes. (Recommendation #1)
- Create feedback loops that allow community participation in course correction. (Recommendations #1 and #2)
- Actively engage tribal leadership in defining desired outcomes and participating in decision-making processes/entities, from the beginning. (Recommendation #8)
- Actively recruit people of color in defining desired outcomes and participating in decision-making processes/entities, from the beginning. (Recommendations #1 and #10)

RECOMMENDATION 1: Adopt a stakeholder engagement framework for major policy and programmatic issues.

Purpose

The stakeholder engagement framework can assist DEL and perhaps other Washington Early Learning Partnership agencies in determining the levels of engagement that are appropriate to inform different types of state early learning decisions. The proposed framework can help guide decisions about stakeholder engagement for new initiatives, coordination efforts, implementation of new or substantially expanded programs, and major changes in policy or programs that affect children, families or providers. Note the intent is to apply the framework for these kinds of decisions, rather than for the routine business of the state.

Engaging stakeholders at these major decision points can boost alignment, coordination and sustainability by:

- Providing decision-makers with the insight and information they need to make sound decisions that remove barriers and advance opportunities for families in diverse communities.
- Promoting the collective understanding, mutual trust, shared direction, and buy-in needed to carry out policies and initiatives successfully and consistently.
- Building momentum and generating support for specific goals and strategies, and the overall early learning direction.

Calibrating the costs and benefits of stakeholder engagement

While deep and consistent stakeholder engagement generates big dividends, it also has costs. Costs can include longer timeframes for decisions and implementation, increased staff time, and the need for resources for both the entity requesting the engagement and the people who are asked to offer comment and counsel. In the State and Local Coordination Project’s community research and public engagement, some people suggested that the new coordination approach should result in fewer meetings.

“Do more of this—asking questions about the problems that need to be solved. Paint a coherent picture of the problems and potential solutions. Appreciate people and keep us informed. Consider ways to get family input on this process.”

From stakeholder interviews

These comments indicate that local, regional and state players are sensitive to time and cost. Additionally, in some instances, stakeholder input has already informed policies and programs, so there is less need for intensive engagement. All of this suggests that it is useful to identify the circumstances when stakeholder engagement provides enough benefit to balance the cost.

This recommended stakeholder engagement framework can inform state- and regional-level choices about when and how to engage stakeholders based on the:

- Type of decision being considered.
- Information needed to set a course of action that best delivers results for children.
- Extent to which stakeholders will need to understand, share and buy in to the decision.
- Audiences/communities whom the actions will affect and who, therefore, should be engaged in discussion.

Framework to select the type of stakeholder engagement

The following two-part framework consists of: (1) three stakeholder-engagement processes with different levels of intensity and reach; and (2) a set of six questions to help agencies determine which process to use. The aim is to find the right balance between process and action. This requires balancing:

- The cost of missing opportunities to identify and adopt best practices and system improvements while removing barriers to service.
- The cost of stretching precious resources even more thinly with the cost of not gathering enough information to act wisely.
- The cost of stretching implementation timelines and resources with the cost of insufficient buy-in and momentum to implement and deliver results for children.

Types of engagement

The chart below suggests three types of stakeholder engagement that address balancing these issues. The chart includes examples of the decisions where each type of engagement would be appropriate, and potential stakeholder groups to consider engaging. This stakeholder engagement may be appropriate during implementation of new or expanded policies or programs, as well as during the development phase. This chart is a companion to the *Six Questions for Choosing the Type of Stakeholder Engagement*, which follows.

Table 6. Types of Stakeholder Engagement

Process*	Sample Types of State Decisions	Likely Stakeholder Groups**
<p>Broad Stakeholder Engagement Process. DEL works collaboratively with ELAC and stakeholders to identify issues, create strategic options, develop draft recommendations, and solicit and incorporate public comments. The process begins at the initial planning stages and continues through development of recommendations. The process encourages broad inclusion and diversity of input. It includes:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Establishment of a workgroup of ELAC members and others to guide the process. • Solicitation and analysis of public comment through state associations and networks, Regional Coalitions and the public, and input from affected stakeholders, such as parents and caregivers, through community cafes and meetings. • Regular communication about progress, timelines, results and the reasons for decisions. 	<p>Development and future updating of <i>Early Learning Plan</i>, and <i>Early Learning and Development Guidelines</i>.</p>	<p>Regional Coalitions, parents, child care providers, educators, school administrators, communities of color, social and health services organizations, health care providers, and the public.</p>
<p>Consultation Process. DEL develops draft proposals and seeks feedback from ELAC and early learning stakeholders on a selection of major strategies, implementation planning for new initiatives or major expansions, and processes to advance the <i>Early Learning Plan</i>. Consultation begins early and continues through development of recommendations. It includes:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Consultation with ELAC at key milestones to get their advice regarding the process for stakeholder input. • Solicitation and analysis of input from affected stakeholders. • Regular publication of information about progress, the decision and 	<p>Selection of strategies (for example, creating a developmental screening system); major system-building components (for example, developing performance goals, indicators and an accompanying simple continuous quality improvement process); and implementation plans for new</p>	<p>Same as above or more focused, depending on what input is most useful and from whom.</p>

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Process*	Sample Types of State Decisions	Likely Stakeholder Groups**
the reasons for that decision.	or substantially expanded programs (such as planning for grants received).	
<p>Targeted Feedback and Regular Communication Process. DEL develops proposals, keeps ELAC and affected stakeholders informed about proposals and implementation plans, and initiates more targeted outreach to specific populations or stakeholder groups. This process includes:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Regular publication of information and communication about the purposes and process. • Targeted requests for feedback and information from stakeholders through occasional conference calls, surveys or meetings. • Communication of the decision and the reasons for the decision. 	Issues relating to advancing priorities, significant policy changes, implementing new initiatives, scaling, reporting and progress monitoring.	ELAC, Regional Coalitions (could be through ELAC participation), affected service providers and families.

* Occasionally a process could start out as one type of engagement and evolve into a different type of engagement.

** In addition to WELP and ELAC.

Questions to aid in choosing stakeholder engagement

Responses to the following questions can inform decisions about the type of stakeholder engagement process to use in specific situations.

Table 7. Six Questions for Choosing the Type of Stakeholder Engagement

Ask	If the Answer is . .	Consider these Actions
<p>1. Do we need stakeholder buy-in for successful implementation and/or sustainability?</p> <p><i>Example: Will large numbers of people need to take concerted action to implement and sustain the Early Learning Plan?</i></p>	Yes, stakeholder buy-in is needed for successful implementation.	Identify what buy-in and cooperation would lead to success and from whom. Consider moving forward with the "Broad Engagement Process" or the "Consultation Process."
<p>2. Do we have enough information to determine an effective and efficient course of action that will work for the breadth of Washington families, cultures and communities? If not, what additional information do we need and what is the best way to get it?</p> <p><i>Example: Parents interviewed for the project said it was hard to find services. Do we know why? Do we know what steps to take to make this easier?</i></p>	We need more information.	Identify the type(s) of information needed and from whom. Consider moving toward the "Broad Stakeholder Engagement Process" with the appropriate stakeholders.
<p>3. Do we need more information about how to reach specific groups of the children, families and others that the program is intended to serve?</p> <p><i>Example: Are there ethnic, racial or income groups of children who are underrepresented in Early Intervention Programs? If so, do we know how to reach these families and children with developmental screening? Do we know what will work in urban areas, and in rural and</i></p>	We need more information.	Identify the local, ethnic or provider communities who have experience, relationships, insight and expertise with the local programs, demographics and economy, and who can offer ideas to strengthen services, implementation plans, and child outcomes. Consider moving toward the "Consultation Process" with the identified communities

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Ask	If the Answer is . .	Consider these Actions
<i>frontier communities?</i>		and/or providers.
<p>4. Do we know how much local customization will be needed for the action to “work” for the diversity of Washington’s cultures and communities but not result in proliferation of unproven service models?</p> <p><i>Example: Do we know what home visiting programs work well for immigrant families who do not yet speak English?</i></p>	We need to know more.	Identify the type(s) of information needed and from whom. Consider moving toward the “Consultation Process” with the appropriate stakeholders.
<p>5. What staffing and/or other resources can be made available to implement the process?</p>	Ample.	Move toward the “Broad Engagement Process” or the “Consultation Process.”
	Very little.	Move toward the “Targeted Feedback and Regular Communication Process.”
<p>6. How much time is available for the process before a decision is needed?</p>	Three months or more.	Move toward the “Broad Engagement Process” or the “Consultation Process.”
	Less than three months.	Move toward the “Targeted Feedback and Regular Communication Process.”

Performance Goals Recommendation

One of the barriers identified in the project’s stakeholder interviews was the lack of common measures of program, system and child outcomes that both the state and regions can use to focus actions and improvements. The *Early Learning Plan* Guiding Principles included accountability (“Provide ways to measure progress over time”); and the Steering Committee’s additional principles included promoting the use of data to improve accountability and program quality. The project’s national best practices research found that when state and regional partners agree on a few statewide performance goals, the shared focus and effort can create dramatic improvements in programs, services and systems serving children. In addition, Washington’s new Governor has expressed strong interest in establishing measurable goals for state performance that can be quantified.

Specific, measurable goals can guide and inform all partners’ work, along with agreed-upon measures and data to gauge their progress and drive improvement in the programs’ quality and results. Effective performance goals can:

- Establish mutual aims among diverse partners.
- Measure how successful state and regional partners have been.
- Focus exploration on variations in how organizations are delivering services and achieving results.
- Inform collective actions that partners can take to improve.

RECOMMENDATION 2: Adopt a handful of performance goals and indicators to help state and regional partners work together, and focus on the same strategic objectives and desired outcomes.

Purpose and use of performance goals

Setting a few, key performance goals will focus the collective efforts of state and regional early learning partners on high-priority actions that implement the state’s *Early Learning Plan*. Setting these goals involves three elements:

- Each *performance goal* sets a specific objective or target for: the quality of services that should be available to children and families across the state; or a system improvement; or the desired outcomes for children.
- An *indicator* is the way to measure progress toward meeting the performance goal.
- *Quality improvement* is the process of using information and data to explore what is working well and what needs to be strengthened, and to make changes that will improve progress, quality or outcomes.

“To be successful requires shared purposes, goals and outcomes with key indicators of success. We should be looking at the indicators and progress, or lack thereof quarterly, and using the data to guide course corrections. Focusing on problem statements and needs hasn’t worked so far and won’t work in the future.”

From Stakeholder interviews

North Carolina provides an example of successfully using performance goals. Several years ago they set a performance goal to ensure that at least 75 percent of all children with special needs in every county—and who receive subsidies or other assistance—are enrolled in high-quality 4- or 5-star rated child care programs. As a result of focused, collective, local and state efforts, 94 percent of those children are now in high-quality care settings.

Following this example, it is recommended that state and regional partners agree on a handful of performance goals focused on: the quality, cultural competence and effectiveness of services; advancing important system improvements; or directly boosting results for children. The state and regional partners should use the performance goals and indicators to:

- Monitor statewide and regional progress toward the goals.
- Understand and consider the unique perspectives, experiences and requirements of children and families in geographic, racial and socio-economic communities across the state.
- Build toward equitable access and outcomes for children by enhancing state and regional capacity (including financial resources) for continuous quality improvement.
- Help the state and regions understand and continually improve their progress toward achieving equitable opportunities and outcomes for young children and their families.

How would it work?

The performance goals and indicators could focus greater state and regional attention on existing goals or targets (such as participation in Early Achievers, or the Early Support for Infants and Toddlers programs), or on new or revised goals.

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For areas where there are regional disparities of resources and capacity, state and regional partners should consider tailoring targets to help each region make ambitious, but achievable progress toward the goal. The performance goals should also be consistent with other processes that establish state early learning priorities. For example, the performance goals should be consistent with the Washington Early Learning Partnership annual priorities. The implementation plan for this recommendation describes the process for state and regional partners to work together to select performance goals.

“Focus on action/results with shared goals, outcomes and indicators and make data easily available to professionals, parents and the public.”

From stakeholder interviews

Of note, the cultural competency review that was part of this State and Local Coordination Project provided several useful and important suggestions for creating performance goals that should be considered in selecting and using the goals:

- Because creating universal goals can reproduce historic inequities and poor outcomes, the state and regional partners should explicitly define success to include “ensuring that each identified demographic within the state is achieving at the level identified in the goal.”
- Since helping all children to be ready and successful is our aim, data should be shared that is disaggregated by race and other demographics so as “to describe differences in access, experience and outcomes based on race, culture, language, income and region, and to begin to make the case for” changes to achieve this aim.

Criteria for selecting performance goals and indicators. The performance goals and indicators should meet the following criteria:

- Advance the *Early Learning Plan* and make important contributions to improving: systems, equitable access to high-quality services, and results for children, including racial equity.
- Set the desired measurable result or objective to be achieved.
- Have sufficient associated data, currently available, that can be disaggregated by race and family income, and gathered periodically to enable monitoring of state and regional progress, and to inform quality improvement.
- Require both state and regional action.
- Be accompanied by the capacity and technical assistance to enable progress monitoring and quality improvement of state and regional efforts.

Examples of possible performance goals. The box below demonstrates what a performance goal for Washington’s Early Support for Infants and Toddlers Program (ESIT) might look like, if the state and regional partners were to choose that program as an important effort for joint action.

Other examples of possible performance goals could be:

- X number or percent (to be determined in the goal-setting process) of infants and toddlers will receive developmental screening by Y (a certain date) (advances *Early Learning Plan Strategy* #6).
- All 10 Regional Coalitions will have in place governance documents that articulate the coalition’s purpose and minimum operating procedures (advances *Early Learning Plan Strategy* #34).

Performance Goal Example

- **ESIT target/performance goal.** The rate of identifying Washington's infants under the age of 12 months needing early intervention services and determined eligible should be 1.2 percent of children under 1 year of age. This compares to the current rate of 0.75 percent, as of December 1, 2012. (An alternative would be to set the goal of identifying infants *and* toddlers from birth to 36 months needing early intervention services and determined eligible at 2.5 percent of all children under 3 years of age. This compares to the current rate of 2.3 percent as of December 1, 2012.)
- **Why is the goal important? Does it advance the Early Learning Plan?** Early intervention can change the trajectory of a child's life for the better. ESIT underpins *Early Learning Plan* Strategy # 7 (Add at-risk children to early intervention services).
- **Are there state and regional data that can serve as an indicator?** Yes. The percentage of children from birth to 1 year identified and determined eligible for early intervention services is disaggregated/reported at the county/region and state levels (per Karen Walker, DEL Early Intervention Program Administrator).
- **Is joint state and regional action needed to help achieve the goal?** DEL and its ESIT program, together with the State and Local Interagency Coordinating Council, could invite representatives from Regional Coalitions, Infant and Toddler Regional Steering Committees, parents, parenting education, home visiting programs, and/or Child Care Aware to help increase the awareness of parents, early learning networks and professionals about the signs of developmental delay and the need for regular developmental screening. Moreover, since regional organizations attempt to reach parents, the improved outreach, referral and service provision will require the creativity and effort of those nearest to families.
- **Quality improvement process.** State and Local Interagency Coordinating Councils and others they invite to participate would examine their data and explore such questions as: Why do we think more children are not identified (for example, parents are not aware)? Why are not more children determined eligible? Are there disproportionalities by race and income? What actions can we take? What can we do differently to better achieve this goal?

How are performance goals different from other current measures?

The Washington State Department of Early Learning already works diligently to respond to a variety of measures, goals and metrics established by the Governor, Legislature, program grants and other sources. These reporting measures include: Government Management Accountability and Performance (GMAP) goals for state agencies; Washington Early Learning Partnership annual priorities; Race to the Top grant goals; and *Early Learning Plan* indicators. However, as Appendix O describes in more detail, most of these other measures either focus solely on state agency performance, or do not provide specific measures that can serve as the focus for joint state and regional efforts.

Recommendations for Coordination at Each System Level

This section contains the recommendations to improve coordination and communication at each level of the early learning system: (1) state agency to state agency; (2) state and regional; and (3) within each region. The recommendations call for enhancements to three existing entities: The Washington Early Learning Partnership, the Early Learning Advisory Council and the Early Learning Regional Coalitions.

Improving the state and local coordination system is similar to a jigsaw puzzle in that many of the individual decisions impact how well the system will work as a whole. Figure 4 on the following page depicts the roles, relationships and feedback loops for the three levels of the early learning coordination system. Following the graphic, Table 8 (“State and Local Early Learning Coordination Structure”) provides an overview of how the three entities will form the backbone of the improved state and local

“There is growing energy and awareness around early learning and the full array of services that children and families need.

However, we are still trying to dig ourselves out of our silos. It is not for lack of wanting to connect, it is that everyone is already running a mile a minute. Lack of time gets in the way.”

From stakeholder interviews

coordination structure. It shows how the proposed recommendations will enhance how the three entities work together.

The improvement of early learning systems accelerates with clearly defined functions or roles, and well-defined relationships among the coordinating bodies. This is because the functions of the state, state-to-regional and regional coordination are interconnected. For example, the Regional Coalitions can help the state understand what is working well and what is not in local communities. This

would give state agencies the information they need to make state policies and programs more effective for children and families.

The functions of each level of the system can be thought of as a job description. Much like the different jobs in a business, such as product design, manufacturing, sales and shipping, each is related to the other.

Following the structure table is Table 9, “Recommended State, ELAC and Regional Roles in the Early Learning System Functions.” It shows the recommended “job descriptions” for the state, state-regional and regional coordination by the functions of an effective early learning system and how each relates to the others. The early learning system functions are the six functions described above (Table 3), plus a cross-cutting function of relationship building and considering stakeholder input. The recommendations include functions that are already being performed and recommended enhancements.

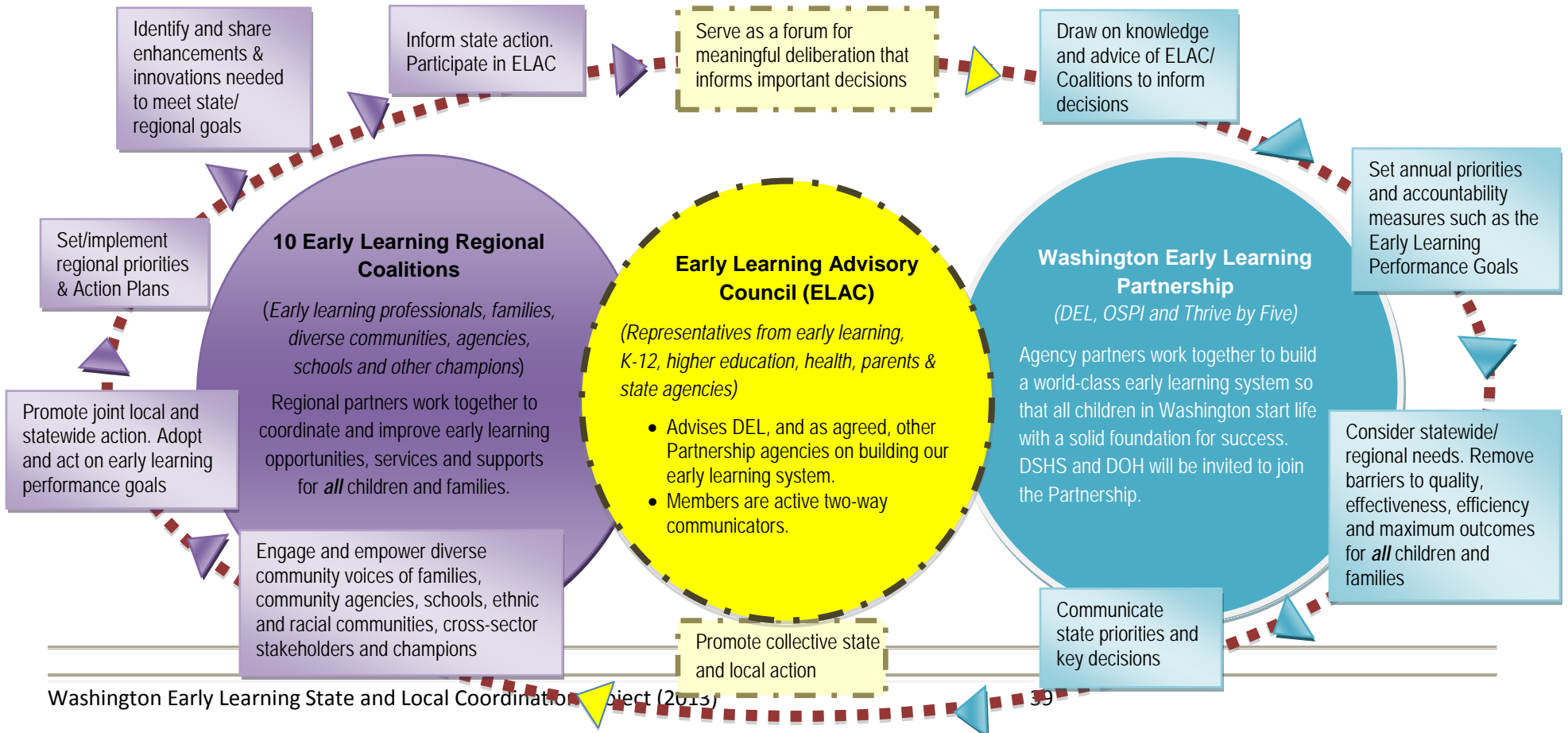
Figure 4. Early Learning Coordination System
Washington’s State and Local Early Learning Coordination System:

Recommendations for Increasing Connections and Collective Action in Partnership with Families and Communities

Washington is increasing connections and collective action across state and regional levels, and across disciplines so that we can:

- Learn what is working and what is needed.
- Continuously improve the quality and effectiveness of services and supports.
- Provide the right services and opportunities to support the development and learning of all children and families regardless of their situation.
- Achieve our Early Learning Plan vision: *In Washington, we work together so that all children start life with a solid foundation for success, based on strong families and a world-class early learning system for all children from birth through third grade.*

Key Partners and Roles



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Table 8. State and Local Early Learning Coordination Structure

	State Agency-State Agency	State-Regional	Regional
	Early Learning Partnership (WELP)	Early Learning Advisory Council (ELAC)	Early Learning Regional Coalitions
Recommended Structure	Interagency partnership of state agencies that fund or set policy for early learning. (No change to agencies' decision-making authority.)	Council of nongovernmental and state agency representatives that provides advice and recommendations to DEL and on issues of common interest, and as agreed, the WA Early Learning Partnership Agencies.	10 Early Learning Regional Coalitions using current coalition boundaries.
Recommended Membership	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • <u>Five state-level agencies</u> that fund and/or set early learning policy: DEL, DOH, DSHS, OSPI and Thrive. (DOH and DSHS will be invited to join the current membership.) • <u>Leaders and directors</u> of these agencies, as appropriate for the work. 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • <u>Membership</u>: 33 members (add representatives from 10 Regional Coalitions and the Early Learning Action Alliance), and more connections to statewide associations and networks. • <u>Two co-chairs</u>: one state agency member and one non-governmental member to be elected by ELAC for a two-year term. • <u>Executive Committee</u> of the two co-chairs and two to three ELAC members (preferably chairs of ELAC working committees). • <u>Working Committees</u> will be established to carry out the ELAC Work Plan. • <u>Designated liaisons</u> to other ongoing committees, such as the Interagency Coordinating Committee (list to be identified in the ELAC workplan). 	<p><u>Membership</u>: To be determined by each Regional Coalition, using guidance to encourage a mix of diverse individuals who, together, can reflect the diverse interests of the region:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Leaders and representatives from each early learning field/sub-system and constituency (for example, communities of color, business) who can make and influence decisions. • Champions and opinion leaders from government, education, business, philanthropy and the media. • Professionals, volunteers and families who represent regional geographic, ethnic and racial diversity. • People who provide or have access to needed skills and capacities.
Recommended Guiding Agreements	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Updated Memorandum of Understanding to include additional state agencies. • Early Learning Plan. • Annual priorities. • Clear agreements about lead agency and partner roles on each issue. 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • ELAC Charter. • Member Job Description and Roles with shared commitments. • Early Learning Plan. • ELAC Work Plan. • Committee Charters (purposes, timeline, etc.). 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Governance document with purposes and minimum operating structure. • Decision-making and communication processes. • Early Learning Plan. • Clear regional plan and goals.

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Recommended Coordination Relationships	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Continue to strengthen the connection between state agency leaders for each early learning sub-system. • Work together to increase alignment, and reduce “silos” of state programs. • DEL draws on advice from ELAC and experience of regional representatives, as do WELP agencies on issues of common interest and as agreed. 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Recommend state goals, strategies and policies. • Serve as a forum for regional/state system-building discussions. • Provide avenue for state leaders and ELAC members to understand regional issues, and demographic and economic shifts. • Provide avenue for regional leaders and ELAC members to understand state agency aims and issues. • Promote joint action among all partners. 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Engage local stakeholders, communities and families. • Provide a voice for regional interests and concerns, offering comments on state goals, strategies and policies. • Participate in ELAC (one representative from each coalition).
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Table 9. Recommended State, ELAC and Regional Roles in the Early Learning System Functions

Functions	State Level Agencies	ELAC	Regional Coalitions
Crosscutting Function: Build Relationships; Consider Stakeholder input	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Create/maintain collaborative working relationships across sectors and agencies. • DEL and, as agreed, other agencies, gather and consider advice/input from ELAC and stakeholders to inform decisions in meaningful ways. • Gather and consider statewide and regional/ local data and needs to inform decisions about how to boost results for children. • Communicate decisions and reasons for decisions. 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Advise on stakeholder engagement processes. • Consider stakeholder input in developing recommendations and giving advice to DEL. • Communicate state-level information, priorities and issues back to communities and constituencies. • Serve as a forum to ensure mutual understanding of state and regional needs, emerging issues, innovations and system building. • Promote joint action among cross-sector partners. • Advocate for early learning priorities. 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Build relationships with communities of color and low-income communities so that the interests of all children are well-represented. • Involve stakeholders from each of the early learning fields. • Engage communities & stakeholders in setting regional priorities. • Bring community voice grounded in understanding of regional experience and demographic/economic shifts to providing advice on state decisions.
1. Set Standards, Goals and Outcomes	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Review data, best practices, and state/ regional successes and gaps. • Set and revise performance goals, outcomes and accountability measures in consultation with ELAC. 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Consider data, best practices, and state/ regional successes and gaps in developing recommendations. • Make recommendations for key standards, performance goals and outcomes. 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Gather, analyze and share successes and experience, regional gaps and needs, and proven and promising practices. • Set regional goals and outcomes.
2. Choose Strategies and Priorities	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Set annual priorities in consultation with ELAC. • Determine state funded services/ programs. • Establish guidelines for tailoring programs to meet local needs, as appropriate. 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Promote mutual understanding of state and regional issues, needs and opportunities. • Advise /make recommendations on key issues, initiatives and system building. 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Set regional priorities and Action Agenda; tailor programs to meet local needs. • Suggest innovations, “promising approaches” and examples of solutions to streamline/ integrate services for state consideration.
3. Ensure Funding and Policy Support	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Secure state, federal and private funds to implement statewide early learning strategies. • Implement policy/funding support for expansion/ enhancement of high-quality supports & services that can boost results for children. 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Advise and make recommendations on key issues, initiatives and system building. 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Identify & share “enhancements” needed to meet state/regional outcomes. • Analyze system/ service funding; identify gaps/ inefficiencies. • Secure and maximize state/ local government and private funds to advance regional strategies.
4. Implement and Expand Services and Programs	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Analyze and understand the needs and capacity of state and regional service delivery systems. • Remove barriers to quality, effectiveness, efficiency and maximum child outcomes. • Decide on phasing, targets and infrastructure to support scaling of systems and services. 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Advise and make recommendations on key issues, initiatives and system building. • Raise and/or advise on emerging issues. 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Engage local/regional stakeholders to identify obstacles/ solutions to promote alignment, efficiency and expansion of effective, high-quality services. • Analyze and share needs with regional and state partners. • Advance state priorities. Select and implement regional services, supports and system building.

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<p>5. Build Public Understanding and Public Will</p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ● Communicate state goals, outcomes and “what it will take” to get there to regional coalitions and to advocates. ● Educate public and cultivate champions using data to show value. 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ● Champion early learning, state goals and outcomes, and “what it will take” to get there in member spheres of influence. 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ● Cultivate diverse champions, use data to show value, communicate regional goals and “what it will take” to get there. ● Work with partners and advocates to develop/ implement public education.
<p>6. Be Accountable for Achieving Outcomes</p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ● Set framework for state/regional outcomes and quality improvement processes that illuminates/addressses inequities. ● Manage data systems and report progress. ● Provide technical assistance for professionals and partners. ● Monitor grantees; manage and account for funds. 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ● Advise on framework for state/regional outcomes. ● Advise and make recommendations on key issues, initiatives and system building. 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ● Implement regional/local quality improvement processes and reporting. ● Engage local/regional stakeholders in reviewing services and programs, and identifying refinements to improve outcomes and reduce inequities. ● Manage and account for funds and report regional results.

State-Level Coordination: Washington Early Learning Partnership Recommendations

The Washington State Early Learning Plan:

[E]ncourages breaking down the barriers of traditional silos based on children’s narrow age ranges, old funding patterns, different types of development (i.e., physical, mental, social-emotional, etc.), and the historic distinctions between a child’s first five years and the school years. (p. 4)

The plan takes a comprehensive view of the state’s early learning system. This “system” is composed of:

“the various policies, programs and services for young children, and for the adults who care for and teach them. When these elements each work well *and* align with the other elements, children will have the best opportunity to reach their full potential.” (p. 51)

The *Early Learning Plan* recognizes that early learning takes place in many locations and is carried out by many people and organizations, with services in several disciplines that support children and families.

Work of the Washington Early Learning Partnership

Since 2006 when the Department of Early Learning (DEL) and Thrive by Five Washington (Thrive) were established, they have worked together to support high-quality early learning opportunities for all

“Do the policy work needed to rethink the system to align funds, policy and service delivery, and reduce duplication.”

From stakeholder interviews

children in Washington. They also began to collaborate with the Office of Superintendent of Public Instruction (OSPI), recognizing that early learning continues and needs to be aligned through 3rd grade. In August 2009 DEL, OSPI and Thrive created the Washington Early Learning Partnership to work in collaboration on behalf of young children and

families in Washington. The three entities signed a voluntary resolution to formalize that relationship and commit to “develop a strong, comprehensive early learning system for all children in Washington State, birth to age 8” (*Early Learning Partnership Joint Resolution*, 2009). See Appendix P.

The *Joint Resolution* commits the parties to link together and, with the input of community stakeholders, to advance early learning in Washington by developing “an aligned statewide early learning system.” The partnership members agreed to come together on policy, funding and program decisions that will build a comprehensive system of services and supports for children and families, prenatal through 3rd grade.

Since signing the *Joint Resolution*, the partnership has met monthly on a variety of projects. These have included creating the state’s first early learning strategic plan (*Early Learning Plan*), drafting the state’s revised *Early Learning and Development Guidelines*, implementing the WaKIDS recommendations, and numerous other projects. At times the partners have been able to engage a diverse and broad range of interested parties in developing recommendations, resulting in increased support for policy changes. They have also joined forces to advocate for state policies that benefit children and families (for example, funding for full-day kindergarten).

In the *Joint Resolution*, the partners agree to work collaboratively to identify priority actions, lead agencies and key steps to build a world-class early learning system in Washington. The partnership has developed annual *Early Learning Partnership Priority Strategies*, which describe the actions to

accomplish each priority, a schedule to complete the work, and the lead and shared responsibilities for each priority. At the end of each year the partnership reports on accomplishments for each of the annual priority strategies.

The partnership has also worked to improve communication with stakeholders about early learning activities. Leaders for each of the members have made numerous joint appearances before the Legislature, early learning forums and stakeholder groups to discuss the importance, value and accomplishments of the partnership. Staff members have worked diligently to coordinate communications, issuing joint reports and news releases.

Expanding cross-sector work

In the project's stakeholder interviews, many stakeholders said the partnership was effective, especially in raising awareness about the importance of early learning. A theme among the ideas to improve coordination was doing more cross-sector work and coordinating at the decision-making level. A number of interviewees and Steering Committee members suggested involving other agencies in the partnership, with the state Department of Health (DOH) and Department of Social and Health Services (DSHS) mentioned most often. One of the key lessons learned from the best practices research was the need for effective state-level coordination across all state agencies that manage significant parts of the early learning system. The project's community outreach also identified adding DOH and DSHS as an opportunity to strengthen Washington's early learning system. See also the recommended roles and early learning system functions for each level of the system (Table 9).

RECOMMENDATION 3. Invite the Department of Health (DOH) and Department of Social and Health Services (DSHS) to participate in the Washington Early Learning Partnership with DEL, OSPI and Thrive.

The Washington State Early Learning Partnership has made an excellent start at aligning goals, strategies and standards. DEL, OSPI and Thrive have begun to break down some of the traditional silos, focusing on desired outcomes for children and families. But many early learning services and family supports are administered by two other agencies who are not currently participating in the partnership: the Department of Health and the Department of Social and Health Services.

DOH provides, or collaborates in, a number of essential services for children and families. For example, DOH is the state lead agency for the federal Early Childhood Comprehensive Systems (ECCS) grant. ECCS provides

"DOH and DSHS have been administering effective, statewide projects for decades that strengthen the resilience of children. Glad that there will now be coordination."

From Round 2 survey responses

leadership to support collaborative planning and implementing of early childhood systems efforts to improve health and early learning for children and families. DOH is also the lead for Title V Maternal and Child Health block grant program. The DOH Office of Nutrition Services manages the Women, Infants and Children (WIC) nutrition program, the WIC breastfeeding Peer Counseling Programs, and the Supplemental Nutrition Assistance Program – Education (SNAP-Ed). The department also manages the Child Profile program for health promotion and disease prevention for infants, children and adolescents, and operates the state immunization registry. DOH provides lead policy and planning for prenatal care, runs a newborn screening program, has a Children with Special Health Care Needs program, is carrying out grant-funded programs related to unmet health needs and childhood obesity, and is working with

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DEL and other partners to create a statewide, universal, developmental screening system for young children. They also collaborate with DEL and Thrive on home visiting services, providing community needs assessment data and data analytic support to help inform key system and funding decisions. Their programs and services are an integral part of the state's early learning system.

DSHS is the lead state agency for child welfare programs, serving vulnerable and at-risk children and families. DSHS also operates the Working Connections Child Care and Seasonal Child Care programs that provide child care subsidies for working parents who qualify for the benefits. DSHS Community Service Offices help families connect with Apple Health for Kids, the First Steps maternity and infant care program, and emergency food and cash assistance programs. DSHS also operates the Washington Connection website, which enables residents to find out if they are eligible for many programs and apply online. DSHS licenses and supplies training for foster parents, and offers training for kinship caregivers. The agency also provides programs to prevent child abuse and abandonment, and offers information about child safety.

"Invite participation of specific DSHS and DOH programs."

"State agencies involved will need commitment from the top."

From Round 2 survey responses

The work of the Washington Early Learning Partnership would be enhanced by adding these two departments to the partnership. In this way the state can continue the good work begun by DEL, OSPI and Thrive to align programs and services, coordinate across disciplines, break down traditional silos, and strengthen the focus on improving outcomes for children and families. Public comments in

Round 2 of the project's public engagement widely supported expanding the partnership.

The *Joint Resolution*, which created the partnership, states that staff from each agency should participate in the Washington Early Learning Partnership to "support development and assure alignment of each priority area with programs and resources." The current three-member partnership includes the Director of DEL, the Superintendent of Public Instruction, the Chief Executive Officer of Thrive, and senior staff from each agency/ organization.

The Secretaries of DOH and DSHS should become members of the partnership. However, they might not be able to attend all partnership meetings. The mission and scope of services these two departments provide is quite broad and diverse. Their early learning programs, while integral to the early learning system, represent a relatively small fraction of the programs and services that each of these two departments provides. At a minimum, the Secretaries from DOH and DSHS should participate in setting the partnership's collective annual priority strategies, and attend other partnership meetings periodically as agenda items and decisions dictate.

The Division or program managers from DOH and DSHS who oversee key early learning services, are knowledgeable about department priorities and resources, and can speak on behalf of the department, should regularly participate in partnership meetings.

RECOMMENDATION 4. Continue to create annual priority strategies, and develop a process for consultation with ELAC and Regional Coalitions.

As mentioned above, the Washington Early Learning Partnership adopts, works together on, and jointly reports on annual *Partnership Priority Strategies*. The annual priorities advance strategies consistent with the state *Early Learning Plan*, and reflect those actions that at least two of the three partners will work on together. The partnership's annual priorities do not include other strategies that DEL, OSPI or Thrive are working on independently.

The partnership should continue to build on the good work that DEL, OSPI and Thrive have initiated, and engage ELAC (including representatives of the Regional Coalitions, see Recommendation #8) in discussing the annual priority strategies before finalizing them. The purposes would be to help foster a culture and practice of two-way communication between state and regional partners, and build awareness and momentum for the annual priorities. As part of this annual process, partnership group agencies could identify areas of common interest upon which they will jointly seek strategic advice from ELAC. Discussions about the annual priority strategies would help inform ELAC and the Regional Coalitions about the proposed partnership priorities so they could align their activities at the regional level with state priorities. At the same time, these discussions would give state agencies an opportunity to: hear of regional approaches that might be broadly adopted; gain regional perspective on the importance of issues and activities; or identify potential challenges or opportunities related to implementation before proceeding. This communication could influence the partnership's decisions about their annual priorities.

“The changes have a potential to be effective. Part of effectiveness will depend on how well each agency listens to input from others.”

From Round 2 survey responses

Engaging ELAC and Regional Coalitions in the process of setting annual priorities can strengthen the connection between state and regional early learning partners. It will also address a key barrier identified by early learning stakeholders: “There is not enough two-way communication and planning among the state and local communities.”

In addition, as part of the discussion of annual priorities, the partnership should consider a method for reviewing progress on achieving the state's *Early Learning Plan* strategies and outcomes, and the timing of that review. (The 10-year plan was adopted in 2010.) The partnership's annual priorities focus on the individual strategies in the plan, but there has not been a review of overall progress toward meeting the ELP outcomes, or consideration of the need to modify the plan in any manner. Once the partnership considers an approach to periodic review of the plan, they should discuss the approach and the timing with ELAC (including representatives from the Regional Coalitions). This would support ELAC's ability to consider the full range of early learning programs and services in its deliberations.

RECOMMENDATION 5. Continue to enhance the two-way communication among Washington Early Learning Partnership members and regional early learning partners. Create a calendar of current and upcoming state-level initiatives and actions that will have an impact on local stakeholders.

As mentioned above, the three members of the current Washington Early Learning Partnership have done an excellent job of coordinating communication among early learning stakeholders about joint initiatives. The three organizations have used their collective communications tools (such as websites, newsletters and public appearances) to keep interested parties informed, and provide consistent messaging about the importance of advancing the *Early Learning Plan* strategies.

However, during the public engagement for this project, early learning stakeholders mentioned several communications challenges that the Steering Committee attempts to address through other recommendations in this report (such as expanding ELAC’s membership to include representation of the

“The mechanisms for two-way communication will help. Gives a clear format for regional work and communicating to the wider community; supports increased networks and communication.”

From Round 2 survey responses

Regional Coalitions, see Recommendation #8). In addition, members of the Steering Committee said that given the high volume of information flowing from the state (about programs, policy changes, funding opportunities or requirements, advocacy interests, etc.), it is sometimes difficult to see how the various pieces fit together. They also said that at times Regional Coalitions are surprised, and even overwhelmed, by multiple requests for local comment and multiple initiatives. Not having a good sense of the schedule

of current and anticipated future activities that may affect local communities and early learning stakeholders makes it challenging for them to plan.

To address this communication challenge, the partnership agencies should discuss the timing of state-level initiatives, and develop a coordinated schedule of current and upcoming activities that would have a significant effect on the members of the Regional Coalitions. The schedule could be posted on the DEL website and updated periodically. The other partnership agencies, Regional Coalitions and others could publicize and link to this calendar. This would help regional partners understand the range of program and policy issues they are currently being asked to address, as well as upcoming actions.

It is not intended that the agencies communicate everyday, routine business through this calendar.

State-Regional Coordination: Early Learning Advisory Council Recommendations

The Legislature established the Early Learning Advisory Council (ELAC) in 2007 to advise the Department of Early Learning on developing a comprehensive and coordinated statewide system of early care, education, supports and services. Today it fulfills that role by providing advice to DEL and, on request, to the Washington Early Learning Partnership. In its first five years, ELAC has worked with DEL, state agencies, and hundreds of early learning professionals and parents to put forth recommendations for key system-building elements, such as our state’s 10-year *Early Learning Plan* and the *Early Learning and Development Guidelines*.

Through the State and Local Early Learning Coordination Project, Washington has examined how it can take the next big step in realizing the *Early Learning Plan’s* vision. Achieving this vision will require joint

goal setting and collective action across sectors, and among state and regional system partners. North Carolina and other states with strong state and local collaborative leadership and accountability systems are seeing impressive results. For example, North Carolina’s Governor Beverly Perdue points to the state’s early childhood focus and collaborative work at the state and local levels as the reason for significant improvements in North Carolina’s end-of-grade test scores.

Washington enjoys a strong Department of Early Learning, a productive Washington Early Learning Partnership, and a burgeoning network of Regional Coalitions. But there is not yet an intentional and meaningful two-way connection between the state (DEL and its sister state agencies) and the Regional Coalitions, local communities and statewide associations who are each working in their own way to improve early learning. In the project’s research, many early learning stakeholders expressed this sentiment and identified several barriers to services for children and families. These barriers included: “not enough two-way communication and planning between the state and local communities” and “no common measures of program, system and child outcomes that both the state and local communities use to show value and focus improvements.”

“The proposed changes provide opportunities for community voice and direct representation from local communities and regions. Proposed communication pathways assure that ELAC gathers local/community input as they shape and form their recommendations. This allows for a more meaningful role for ELAC members and more accurate and current information from local communities. This local input can also help to set or readjust state level priorities.”

From Round 2 survey responses

ELAC has many of the ingredients needed to become the place, or “table,” where the right people from DEL, other state agencies, Regional Coalitions, and representatives of statewide networks of parents and educators can work together to strengthen the coordination of services, systems and results for children. Strengthening ELAC follows from the project Steering Committee’s principle to foster “high performing state and local partnerships that work together to improve results.” In addition, the *Advancing Racial Equity Theory of Change* outcome map notes that ELAC is one of the existing formal pathways for the voice and influence of those furthest from opportunity.

The following recommendations call for ELAC to serve a more focused and active function in enhancing state and local communication, and promoting joint action among early learning partners. See also the recommended roles and early learning system functions for each level of the system (Table 9).

RECOMMENDATION 6. Strengthen ELAC’s advisory function in the early learning system by making it a forum for state and regional partners to: (a) share information and plan improvements; (b) inform decisions in meaningful ways; and (c) promote joint actions that cross-sector partners can take to improve services and results for our state’s rich diversity of children and families.

ELAC functions

The Legislature established ELAC to advise DEL on statewide early learning issues.⁴ Strengthening ELAC’s advisory function in the ways recommended will require having the right people at the table and

⁴ From Washington authorizing legislation (RCW 43.215.090): (1) The early learning advisory council is established to advise the department on statewide early learning issues that would build a comprehensive system of quality early learning programs and services for Washington’s children and families by assessing needs and the availability

authentic two-way information-sharing that is used to inform substantive decisions in meaningful ways. This combination will help all the partners continually improve the services and supports, and set priorities that will best support the development and learning of our state's rich diversity of children and families. (For more on ELAC's membership, see Recommendation #8, below.) Jointly focusing on a handful of statewide early-learning performance goals and a continuous quality improvement process (see Recommendation #2, above) will further help ELAC identify how to do even better for children and families.

The ultimate success of ELAC's ability to fulfill this new function will depend upon all involved working together to help ELAC to:

- Become a forum for meaningful deliberation and influence on important decisions.
- Engage members who are connected to statewide networks and Regional Coalitions, and who are active two-way communicators to bring the perspectives of their communities and constituencies to the state, and communicate state priorities to their constituents.
- Create joint statewide goals that provide the opportunity for the state and local communities to work together to improve services, systems and results for children.

Member roles and responsibilities

Carrying out this enhanced function will require ELAC members to play new and more specific roles.

"I hope to see a cycle of public engagement with members of ELAC that will directly inform the advisory function to the implementation of the Early Learning Plan."

From Round 2 survey responses

These new roles elaborate on those described in the state authorizing language and the *Head Start Act of 2007* (see Appendix B). These roles also aim to make staffing and participating in ELAC a high value contribution: to DEL, to members of the Washington Early Learning Partnership, to the Regional Coalitions, to ELAC members and their constituencies, and ultimately to children and families across Washington.

The initial transition and sequencing from the current roles to new roles is considered in the project Implementation Plan. It is intended that ELAC will create a work plan (see Recommendation #7). Setting this work plan will provide a regular opportunity to consider what work is the most important, and what capacity is needed and available to ELAC's work. It is not intended that ELAC would take on each of these roles simultaneously.

ELAC members' roles may include the following:

1. Review and advise on updating the *Washington State Early Learning Plan*, which guides work to promote alignment of private and public sector actions, objectives and resources to ensure the optimal development and learning of children from prenatal through 3rd grade.
2. Recommend Early Learning Performance Goals, measures, and a method for monitoring progress, continuous quality improvement and annual priorities.
3. Recommend methods for improving state and local coordination of early learning care,

of services, aligning resources, developing plans for data collection and professional development of early childhood educators, and establishing key performance measures. (2) The council shall work in conjunction with the department to develop a statewide early learning plan that guides the department in promoting alignment of private and public sector actions, objectives, and resources, and ensuring school readiness.

- education, supports and services.
4. Assess needs and the availability of services.
 5. Provide an avenue for state leaders to understand regional issues, and for regional leaders to understand and promote state aims.
 6. Recommend strategies to align resources, supports and services from prenatal care through 3rd grade.
 7. Recommend methods to improve and streamline the access of families to early learning care, education, supports and services provided by DEL, DOH, DSHS and OSPI.
 8. Develop recommendations on plans for data collection and professional development of early learning educators.
 9. Develop recommendations to DEL for the Governor and Legislature on major system improvements, or as requested by the Director of DEL, partnership group agencies as agreed, the Governor and/or the Legislature (as was done in the Birth-to-Three Subcommittee legislation).
 10. Raise public awareness about the critical importance and benefits of high-quality early learning for *all* children, and about state and regional early learning plans and efforts.
 11. Develop, implement and review an ELAC work plan, mutually agreed upon by the members, DEL, and other state agencies seeking ELAC's advice.
 12. Identify and promote joint action that all partners can take to strengthen services, reduce disparities, and improve results for children and families.

While ELAC's authorizing language would allow these roles, in the future, the legislation should be revised to further specify the functions. There may also be a need for other policy changes. As was noted in the State and Local Coordination Project's best practices research: "Systems integration is tough work and can take years. Institutionalizing governance structures in statute with mandated purposes, participation and authorities fosters durable systems that are less dependent on individual leaders" (Arizona early learning leader interviewed for this project).

RECOMMENDATION 7. Clarify how ELAC will carry out these more focused functions by: (a) developing guiding documents that describe ELAC's structure, charter, ground rules, and members' roles and responsibilities; (b) developing an annual ELAC work plan; and (c) instituting these functions and processes.

Carrying out these new functions will require clarity of purpose, roles, responsibilities, and operating processes so that ELAC and the entities to which it is connected can work together effectively and efficiently. For this reason, there should be a set of guiding documents that reflects ELAC's strengthened functions and an orientation process for new members.

Guiding documents and a new member orientation process

ELAC should have three guiding documents: a *charter*, a statement of member roles and responsibilities, and a work plan. In addition, a process for orienting new members should be developed.

1. ***ELAC Charter.*** The charter should articulate: ELAC's purposes, roles, committee structures, decision-making and operating processes; and a periodic evaluation process for assessing and identifying ways to improve ELAC's effectiveness. The charter will help ELAC members work together

effectively, and make ELAC's work clear to other early learning and education partners across the state. Recommendations for key new items to include in the *Charter* include the following.

A. **ELAC committees.** ELAC should establish an Executive Committee and a manageable number of committees (as needed) to carry out its work. In general, committees should be ad hoc and focused on a specific purpose, such as the committees that developed the *Early Learning Plan* and the *Early Learning and Development Guidelines*. However, standing committees should also be considered as needed. Non-ELAC members should be invited to join the ad hoc and/or standing committees, as appropriate.

- **The Executive Committee (Standing Committee)** should have the following roles: (1) monitor overall progress of the work plan; (2) plan ELAC meetings and work with DEL staff to set agendas; (3) make committee assignments for tasks that span multiple committees; (4) stay abreast of and navigate emerging issues; and (5) act on behalf of ELAC on agreed-upon time sensitive decisions. The Executive Committee should be composed of four to five members, including the ELAC Co-chairs. A Regional Coalition member should be on the Executive Committee.
- **Birth-to-Three Committee.** Establishing this committee was one of the recommendations in the *2012 Birth to Three Subcommittee Report*,⁵ which recommended investments in birth-to-three services for 2013 through 2015. The report identified the following potential roles for the committee: (1) to provide focus and advice on the continued progress of birth-to-three services and systems development, with a specific focus on the accessibility and quality of services for infants, toddlers and their families; and (2) to promote the coordination and accessibility of services to vulnerable children and families. A decision is pending on whether it will be a standing or an ad hoc committee.
- **Ad Hoc Committees** can be determined, as needed, when developing the work plan. Such committees would provide recommendations and advice, as charged by a Committee Charter, to carry out the ELAC work plan. The practice of including ELAC members and others who are not ELAC members should be continued. Doing so will allow ELAC to benefit from specialized expertise and provide the opportunity to engage stakeholders. DEL should appoint the chairperson of each ad hoc committee. However, where one or more other agencies request advice, that agency or agencies should designate the chairperson.

"ELAC should communicate with State Interagency Coordinating Council (SICC) and county interagency coordinating councils; include pediatricians/ medical homes in the structure."

From Round 2 survey responses

B. **Liaisons between ELAC and related initiatives and committees** should be established (as needed) to provide a voice for ELAC in other policy tables and a feedback loop between ELAC and these related efforts (such as the State Interagency Coordinating Council for early intervention, Universal Developmental Screening Partnership, Quality Education Council, or the *Ready and Successful Schools PreK-3rd Action Plan* Workgroup). Liaisons would allow ELAC to stay abreast of the plans, issues and opportunities being considered

⁵ Washington State Birth to 3 Subcommittee Recommendations, December 2012.
http://www.del.wa.gov/publications/research/docs/B3_recommendations_2013-15.pdf

that could inform ELAC's work, and where ELAC's voice could inform the work of other policy tables and initiatives. A schematic of related policy tables and initiatives should be developed and reviewed periodically to determine where ELAC liaisons and advice are needed.

- C. **ELAC meetings** should be held as needed to carry out the Council's work. ELAC should have six four- to six-hour regular meetings per year. As needed, additional special meetings could be scheduled. ELAC should have alternative ways of holding these meetings that do not require members to travel, including video conferencing. Committees should meet in the months between full ELAC meetings and more frequently as needed to complete their work. To facilitate collaboration and system building, there should be an opportunity for members and Early Learning Partnership agencies to suggest agenda items to the Executive Committee.

- D. **Improved communication between meetings** should be instituted. To be effective, ELAC members need to stay abreast of developments that relate to its work. The pace of policy deliberations and initiatives related to children and families from prenatal through 3rd grade is far too rapid to rely solely on updates at meetings. In-between meeting communication could take the form of regular emails ,with periodic conference calls or Webinars for more complex topics.

“Hold meetings in different locations across the state to expand opportunities to hear families’ voice; include ways for local communities to share what is working well and what is not, and use feedback to support continuous quality improvement.”

From Round 2 survey responses

2. **Member Roles and Responsibilities.** ELAC should have written roles and responsibilities for its members and leaders. This will enable members to transition to the new roles and will provide clarity for others who work with ELAC. Examples that arose during the project's discussions include a shared commitment to: (a) focus on results for *all* children and families; (b) reduce the opportunity gaps experienced by our state's most vulnerable children; (c) represent the perspectives of constituencies and sectors rather than individual member and organizational interests; (d) work together to promote alignment of private and public sector actions, objectives and resources; and (e) develop a comprehensive and coordinated statewide system of care, education, supports and services. In addition, ELAC ground rules should be established and included in the member *Roles and Responsibilities*.
3. **Work Plan.** An *ELAC Work Plan* would provide an opportunity to discuss and agree on the most important issues for ELAC's work. This will enable timely, focused deliberation and identification of how partners can work together across the system. ELAC and DEL should mutually agree upon the *ELAC Work Plan*. If other state agencies seek ELAC's advice, they should approve the relevant sections of the *Work Plan*.
4. **New Member Orientation Process.** To prepare incoming members to play active and effective roles, an orientation process should be developed. The orientation process should include: (1) an initial meeting or meetings with ELAC staff, agency leaders and ELAC co-chairs; (2) an *ELAC Member Handbook*; and (3) connection to a member mentor who can answer questions and facilitate a smooth onboarding through the first two to four meetings.

The purposes and elements of the *ELAC Member Handbook* should be:

- **Know the people** — List of all ELAC members, their terms of office, their contact information and affiliations; and a list of key agency staff.
- **Know how ELAC operates** — ELAC Charter; Member Roles and Responsibilities; Committee charters and members; number and types of meetings; Agency/member communication protocols; and ELAC connections and liaisons to other key initiatives and committees.
- **Know the work** — The State *Early Learning Plan*; *ELAC Work Plan*; Partnership Group Annual Priorities; State and Local Coordination Structure; Roles and Functions; Stakeholder Engagement Protocols; Performance Goals; meeting summaries from the past year; and briefing documents for key work items.

RECOMMENDATION 8. Expand ELAC membership to include representation of each Regional Coalition and deepen connections to statewide associations representing key early learning fields.

Early Learning Advisory Council composition

Serving as a forum for system building and promoting joint state and regional action requires that people with the right experience, expertise, relationships and level of influence be at the table. To extend ELAC’s reach and import, ELAC members should be:

“In addition to providing feedback on proposed or future initiatives, it is imperative that this process also include avenues for regions to share feedback about work being implemented currently so that we have a shared understanding of what is working well, what needs strengthening. This information should be used to develop next steps that support continuous quality improvements.”

From Round 2 survey responses

- Affiliated with statewide networks/associations of parents and professionals, and to the Regional Coalitions, to the fullest extent possible.
- Individuals who make or influence decisions in their field or community and are well respected by their peers and colleagues.
- Individuals who are committed to enhancing high-quality early learning from prenatal through 3rd grade in Washington and advancing the principles of racial equity.

ELAC’s composition also needs to meet the description in its authorizing language: “The Council shall include diverse, statewide representation from public, nonprofit, and for-profit entities. Its membership shall reflect regional, racial, and cultural diversity to adequately represent the needs of all children and families in the state” (RCW 43.215.090). As noted below, under *Appointing Authority*, the DEL Director will be responsible for working with the Governor to ensure this diversity and composition.

Number and representation of members

ELAC should be expanded from the 23 members named in RCW 43.215.090 to the 33 members described below. This expansion and designation of current positions for “leaders in early childhood education” would add to ELAC representatives from:

- Each of the 10 Regional Coalitions.
- The Early Learning Action Alliance (a 50-member coalition of nonprofits and associations working to advance early learning in Washington).

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The State and Local Coordination Project Steering Committee had recommended adding two additional positions to ELAC, a representative each of Child Care Aware of Washington and Early Childhood Comprehensive Systems (ECCS) within DOH. However, the Washington Early Learning Partnership decided to limit the new members to the 10 Regional Coalitions and the Early Learning Action Alliance.

Table 10 shows the recommended ELAC membership. The recommended changes add 10 new positions, and specify the expertise and affiliation of the current three Governor’s undesigned early learning expert positions. These recommendations meet the requirements of the federal *Head Start Act of 2007*, which requires certain membership. (See Appendix Q for a comparison of federal and state membership requirements.)

In addition, all ELAC members should be affiliated with statewide networks and associations, Regional Coalitions, or Washington Early Learning Partnership agencies. These affiliations would expand ELAC’s understanding of issues and innovations in the field, enhance its communication with communities, and increase its ability to promote joint action across sectors.

Table 10. Recommended ELAC Membership: 33 Members (23 current, 10 new)

#	Expertise and/or Affiliation
1	Department of Early Learning Director
1	Office of Financial Management
1	Department of Social and Health Services
1	Department of Health
1	Student Achievement Council
1	State Board for Community and Technical Colleges
1	Office of Superintendent of Public Instruction (OSPI designates)
1	Representative of Thrive by Five Washington (to be appointed by Thrive by Five Washington Board)
2	Child care providers— one child care family home provider and one child care center provider affiliated with regional/ statewide associations
1	Head Start State Collaboration Director
1	Representative from Head Start, Early Head Start, Migrant, Seasonal or Tribal Head Start
1	Representative of Washington State Association of Educational Service Districts
1	Representative of state agency responsible for Early Intervention
2	Two members of the state House of Representatives, one from each caucus designated by the House
2	Two members of the state Senate, one from each caucus designated by the Senate
2	Parents— one from DEL’s parent advisory group, and one representing statewide associations or organizations that engage families with children from birth through 3 rd grade (such as PTSA, HS/ECEAP Parent Ambassadors)
1	Tribal representative, designated by sovereign tribal governments
1	Representative from the Washington Federation of Independent Schools
10	One representative from each of the 10 Regional Coalitions
1	Representative of the Early Learning Action Alliance

Appointment process and voting

- **Nominations.** To ensure that members are affiliated with statewide or regional coalitions/ associations, the appropriate statewide associations and networks should nominate members for the Governor’s appointment.
- **Appointing Authority.** Except as noted in the membership list above, the Governor should appoint members. This is consistent with ELAC’s authorizing legislation. In making appointments, the DEL Director will be responsible for working with the Governor to ensure that ELAC includes “regional, racial, and cultural diversity to adequately represent the needs of all children and families in the state,” as stated in the ELAC authorizing language.
- **Voting/Non-Voting.** The Director of DEL is designated as a nonvoting member since ELAC is to advise DEL. Representatives from other state agencies should be voting members, except when they are asking for ELAC’s advice. In these cases, they should recuse themselves from voting on related recommendations.

Regional Coordination: Regional Coalitions Recommendations

Development of Regional Coalitions

For many years early learning champions in Washington have been working hard to create “tables” around which diverse players can meet to consider, plan and implement early learning services. At the state level the Early Learning Advisory Council was created to do this, with a new iteration part of the recommendations in this report (see Recommendations #6, #7 and #8). Key state agencies have formed collaborations, such as the Washington Early Learning Partnership, to plan and advance joint initiatives that span the work of different agencies and sectors. Similarly, early learning professionals, parents, and business and civic leaders in local communities have created networks and coalitions to: explore and understand localized needs; plan joint action to expand services; improve quality; and build public support.

Over the past several years, 10 Infant/Toddler Regional Steering Committees and Regional Coalitions have built and normalized their structures and are now integrating their efforts. These 10 Regional Coalitions plan and implement regional and state-level initiatives tied to the Ready & Successful strategies of the *Washington Early Learning Plan*. Increasingly, these coalitions have become important platforms for designing and implementing local efforts (such as developmental screening outreach) and statewide initiatives (such as WaKIDS, Early Achievers, and Love. Talk. Play.).

These Regional Coalitions are a reflection of what Washington leaders understand from best practices in other states (as noted in Appendix F) and Washington’s experience through more than a decade of early learning coalition work. This experience shows that the improvement of early learning systems accelerates with clearly defined roles and well-defined relationships among actors across sectors.

Figure 5. Map of Regional Coalitions



Strengthening the Regional Coalitions

Many of the barriers stakeholders identified in this project’s community engagement process relate to the need for sufficient, high-quality, and culturally competent early learning services available in local communities. Stakeholder comments included: “There are not enough providers for some types of services”; “There are not enough people who meet professional standards in some parts of the state and in some communities of color”; and “The transition from early learning to elementary school is tough for families.” To address these issues effectively requires thoughtful and coordinated local and regional action, along with support from and coordination with state-level partners.

With the advent of the ELAC, the Early Learning Partnership and the Regional Coalitions across the state, Washington has taken great strides to improve the state’s early learning system. These collaborations help give structure to interactions at the state and regional levels to better address these barriers, and better support children and families. While there have always been some connections among state and local partners, it is often difficult on short timelines to determine which players need to be involved, and to engage them in needed deliberation. Now, with state and regional partners’ success in formalizing and strengthening roles and relationships at each level (state, ELAC, regional networks/coalitions), all involved can potentially take joint action to build and refine the early learning system.

This set of recommendations aims to create a visible, durable and efficient method for accomplishing these goals and engaging a variety of community partners on issues important to families. Creating the consistent set of roles and relationships described in the *Recommended State, ELAC and Regional Roles in the Early Learning System Functions* (see Table 9, above) will give state legislative and agency decision makers a clear place to seek perspective, insight and guidance as they plan state issues. At the same time, local and regional players will be able to effectively advance their local initiatives, integrate systems, and close the opportunity gap for local families. The recommended strengthening of the Regional Coalitions will also create a known place for diverse stakeholders to become engaged, voice their needs and interests, and mobilize to increase public support for early learning.

The recommendations below and the associated implementation steps aim to help coalitions embody the *Characteristics of Effective Coalitions* listed in the table below, and developed and vetted with

Regional Coalitions as part of this project. This list of characteristics is drawn from the project’s research review of collaborative leadership, collective impact and early learning governance, along with research into best practices in North Carolina, Arizona and Oklahoma. Though each coalition may manifest these characteristics in different ways and over different timeframes associated with their stage of development, these characteristics can help guide implementation of this project’s recommendations.

Table 11. Characteristics of Effective Regional Coalitions

Effective Regional Coalitions have . . .	
1.	Capable, credible leadership with access to elected officials and community leaders. Able to build needed relationships, work together to set priorities, make decisions, implement plans, and hold partners and themselves accountable for achieving their objectives.
2.	Effective governance and decision-making structures that enable the coalition and its workgroups to gain credibility among local, regional and state system partners by demonstrating transparency, engaging diverse communities, and setting and implementing priorities.
3.	Distributed leadership and action with clear roles across executive leadership structures, a Coordinator, and other coalition workgroups and committees. Leaders represent and bridge multiple sectors, racial and ethnic groups, and areas of the region.
4.	Authority/influence and ability to allocate, guide and change the way services are planned, delivered and customized among partners.
5.	Credibility that is earned by demonstrating transparency of decision-making, fairness, and value to the community and to members.
6.	Savvy system-building and community-building skills that bridge systems, engage communities, and influence regional and state systems and services.
7.	Effective relationships and active engagement with: <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • <i>Regional Early Learning System Partners</i> (such as K-12 schools, health, child care and early intervention) who work together to build effective systems and improve child and family outcomes. • <i>Families and providers</i> to learn and understand what works and what needs strengthening, and to create solutions and course corrections. • <i>Communities of color and low-income communities</i> to identify barriers, and create effective strategies for improving the learning and development of children who are furthest from opportunity.
8.	Ability to gather and use anecdotal and quantitative data and measures to guide priority setting, program/system improvements and accountability.
9.	Establishment and revision of strategic direction through analysis of useful anecdotal and quantitative data, fair and transparent decision-making, and use of a multi-year Action Plan that guides coalition action and connects local, regional and state priorities.
10.	Effective cultivation and engagement of champions among the general public and elected officials to mobilize support for regional and statewide goals.
11.	Simple multi-level regional communication protocols/mechanisms to understand emerging issues and offer insight to deliberations.

The recommendations for Regional Coalitions align well with the capacity building efforts that Thrive by Five Washington and the Department of Early Learning have supported for several years in the Infant Toddler Regions and Regional Coalitions. However, each coalition will need to assess its own capacity to implement the recommendations.

Note that the tasks the recommendations in this report suggest that each of the three “levels” (ELAC, DEL and the Early Learning Partnership, and Regional Coalitions) carry out are interlinked. For example,

the Regional Coalitions can effectively partner in selecting and using the statewide performance goals only after ELAC and DEL develop a collaborative stakeholder engagement process (see the discussion of Recommendation #1, above). The Implementation Plan in Section XI of this report provides symbols to flag these interdependencies. See also the recommended roles and early learning system functions for each level of the system (Table 9).

RECOMMENDATION 9. Continue to strengthen the effectiveness and durability of Regional Coalitions.

For the past several years, local coalitions (often at the county level) have been working to connect their efforts and articulate relationships so that their Regional Coalition has a good understanding of local needs. These efforts have enabled communities with strengths in a specific part of the regional early learning system to support other parts of the region. In addition, private and public agencies have worked hard with the Regional Coalitions to support various statewide and regional initiatives, and secure an adequate level of funding to allow Regional Coalitions to develop and carry out these initiatives successfully. A key part of ensuring a durable and consistent structure across the state will be to identify a durable funding source for the Regional Coalitions.

“This group [regional coalitions] seems to have the potential for improving communication across the state and reaching into local communities and building support for improvements in the system. I think a group of carefully chosen members could really be a very effective change agent for the entire process.”

From Round 2 Survey responses

Currently, this multi-funder approach (funded by Thrive by Five Washington, DEL and six other funders through “Community Momentum” grants) supports operational development, program expansion and system strengthening efforts. It also funds each region to implement specific work streams (such as WaKIDS, Infant Toddler consultation and home visiting development). This historic and current work forms a strong foundation for the state-local coordination structure.

Individual regions vary in their geographic size, population and the number of unique communities whose needs must be understood and addressed. They also vary in the length of time that Regional Coalitions have “coalesced” their planning and implementation into a regional scope. One of the keys to success for the State and Local Coordination Project recommendations is having predictable roles, responsibilities and relationships. All coalitions should work to strengthen their effectiveness by:

- Assessing their existing structure, capacity and dedicated resources against the roles the *Regional Roles in the Early Learning System Functions* (in Table 9) identifies, and identifying areas to strengthen.
- Continuing to develop as a unified regional structure, integrating with the Infant/Toddler Regional Steering Committees’ structure and work.
- Reviewing the *Characteristics of Effective Coalitions* (Table 11), and identifying the coalition’s strengths and unique ways to further strengthen them.
- Taking steps to assure that the coalition has a visible, accessible and consistently used “table,” founded on authentic relationships with organizations, providers and people that are representative of families in their region, to serve regional and state planning and implementation needs.

- Reviewing the coalition’s operational structure and leadership, adopting guiding documents and other mechanisms to ensure: effective decision-making; broad agreement; effective implementation; and regional- and state-level influence.
- Identifying the coalition members’ knowledge, skills, relationships and ability to move local, regional and state early learning priorities forward, and seeking members who could help the coalition further this aim.

RECOMMENDATION 10. Increase engagement of diverse regional stakeholders.

As stakeholders noted during public engagement for this project, there are many “structural” and “relational” barriers that children and families experience as they try to access the supports and services they need in order to be successful. Many of these barriers are by-products of the way the early learning system has “emerged” from differing purposes, funding streams and program models over the past 50 years.

Moreover, children and families experience many of these barriers at a local service point in their

“Include public libraries in the coalitions.”

“Include the disability community.”

“Involve other organizations/programs.”

“Collaborate with local health departments.”

“True parent involvement is critical.”

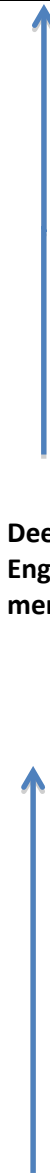

From Round 2 survey responses

communities. The opportunities for improvement that stakeholders identified during the project’s public engagement focus on ways to bring together professionals from many early learning related disciplines in conjunction with parents who use the services to design better approaches and overcome barriers at the local and state levels. These reasons alone suggest that the existing diverse set of professionals at the Regional Coalition tables needs to be even more diversified to include more parents, and early elementary (K-3) and health professionals. In particular,

parents and cultural community leaders can play important roles both as coalition members and as supporters outside formal membership, as shown in Table 12. In addition, broadening engagement to a wider community will help build public will and support for early learning across the state.

To realize all these opportunities, some Regional Coalitions will need to strengthen their efforts to engage other champions who may not be directly involved in delivering or receiving early learning services. Moreover, efforts to close the opportunity gap and increase equity will require engaging different voices from those often at formal tables. Regional Coalitions will need to articulate different types of engagement and membership in regional deliberation and action in order to capture these varied types of engagement. The table below provides a sample framework that might form a useful starting point for Regional Coalitions to develop their own stakeholder engagement processes.

Table 12. Sample Types of Stakeholder Engagement for Regional Coalitions

Engagement Opportunities					Audience					
 Deeper Engagement Deeper Engagement 	<i>Inside Formal Coalition Membership</i>				Parents	Cultural Community Leaders	Professionals	Organizations	Community Influencers	General Public
	Roles	Opportunities	Responsibilities	“Asks”						
	Coalition Officer	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Lead regional initiative Participate in regional governance Represent region at ELAC 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Oversee regional initiatives Promote Coalition effective functioning Represent regional interests Promote joint state-local priorities Participate in Joint Performance Goals/CQI 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Thought leadership In-kind and/or funding support Leadership and advocacy 	X	X	X		X	
	Coalition Member	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Share perspective & insight Vote on regional priorities and other decisions Learn about state/ regional priorities and share with others 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Bring local and regional issues to table Bring state and regional issues and priorities to their field and community Coordinate regional initiatives Participate in Joint Performance Goals/CQI 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Coordination In-kind and/or funding support Service/ Procedure change 	X	X	X	X	X	
	Topical Point Person	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Serve as regional expert on a topic 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Stay abreast of topical issues, developments and strategies 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Provide information, skill and expertise in topical area Provide leadership 	X	X	X		X	
	<i>Outside Formal Coalition Membership</i>									
	Advisor	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Share perspective and insight 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Be knowledgeable about specific customer groups, services and systems 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Provide experiential/expert advice 	X	X	X		X	
	Partner	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Connect Coalition work to other community priorities 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Remove procedural or policy obstacles Provide in-kind and/or funding support Speak on behalf of regional efforts 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Policy /procedure change In-kind and/or funding support Representation of EL perspective at other tables 				X		
	Advocate	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Understand current initiatives 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Advocate for regional priorities to policymakers and others 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Build and leverage relationships Take advocacy action 	X	X	X	X	X	
	Follower	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Receive useful information 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Make use of regional initiative information and services 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Tell others about the Coalition work 	X	X	X	X	X	X
Event Participant	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Attend Coalition events 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Participate 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Engage in regional work 	X	X	X	X	X	X	

To strengthen and diversify members and other supporters of regional work, it is recommended that each coalition:

- Identify the types of engagement opportunities they will use to involve different types of stakeholders, naming the roles, responsibilities, opportunities and “asks.” Doing so will enable this diverse set of parents, community influencers, cultural communities and professionals to

easily share their wisdom as the coalition makes decisions. Increasing community engagement will also broaden support for the early learning movement.

- Document and publicize the committees, processes and protocols that allow a diverse set of players to share their needs and experience, take joint action, and champion regional priorities in their communities.
- Assess current outreach efforts to different cultural, income-level and geographically remote communities, and implement new outreach approaches where necessary.
- Assess current skills, infrastructure and processes to cultivate advocates, funders and policymakers. Then take action to strengthen these functions. Be intentional about mentoring, training and supporting new leaders in communities furthest away from opportunity.
- Assess current skill, infrastructure and processes to raise parent and public awareness about regional priorities, initiatives and services, and take action to strengthen these functions.

RECOMMENDATION 11. Strengthen joint regional and state action to achieve common goals.

The above recommendations for the Regional Coalitions are focused on strengthening their infrastructure to assure important opportunities for input and engagement. However, as “collective impact” research and other sources show, the opportunities this State and Local Coordination Project has identified and the goals in the *Washington Early Learning Plan* cannot be achieved merely by enhancing capacity. Ensuring that each Regional Coalition serves as a forum and coordinator to implement local priorities, and to work in common cause with other regions and state-level partners is

“Partners need to be open and have shared goals; need to adopt common goals that are integrated into the entire system.”

From Round 2 survey responses

key to success. Similarly, intentional effort to connect local and regional priorities and action with state priorities and initiatives can help to strengthen the cycle of planning, acting and refining our efforts as we learn. In the past several years, the power of joint action has been richly demonstrated as state and regional partners have worked together to implement important initiatives such as WaKIDS,

Love. Talk. Play., and Infant Toddler consultation services. These efforts have shown that proactive implementation planning works, and “after the fact” corrections are not needed when we use regional and state structures to advance “mutually-reinforcing action.”

As Washington continues to expand and improve early learning services and systems, our ability to close the opportunity gap and accelerate children’s preparedness and success will depend on our ability to work in concert. Additionally, as the need increases to address the increasing racial and ethnic diversity in our state and remove the most difficult barriers, everyone in the early learning field will need to tap into the rich experience of players at multiple levels. Working together to use the power of all local, regional and state players is also integral to our ability to build broad support for early learning across Washington.

The Regional Coalitions can also reach out to state partners to connect their aspirations with state plans. Each Regional Coalition should:

- Nominate a regional advisor to participate in deliberation at the ELAC table and bring other community partners to important deliberations.
- Negotiate multi-directional communication protocols to facilitate information sharing and learning among coalitions, and between coalitions and ELAC.

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- Review and refine their agenda setting process so that local and regional insight, priorities, concerns and needs can easily be identified, and shared in regional and statewide deliberations.
- Create or refine an *Action Plan* that articulates regional initiatives (including those connected to statewide initiatives) and drives joint action to implement initiatives and close the opportunity gap.
- Participate in the statewide performance goal selection process (see Recommendation #2), and use performance goals to continuously improve regional action.
- Work with statewide advocacy organizations and regional partners to build capacity and skill in advocating for regional priorities.

Conclusion

The recommendations for state and local coordination in this report can result in important benefits for children and families. Ultimately:

- Families and those working at the local and regional levels will have a consistent voice in shaping early learning policies and programs.
- People will join together in their region to understand their needs, learn from each other, and find ways to improve early learning opportunities for all children.
- People from all regions of the state and those at the state level will work together to close the opportunity gap for young children.
- All children will have what they need for healthy development and learning at every step from prenatal through 3rd grade.

“Empowered parents, family members and caregivers can work together to improve a child’s life trajectory.”

From stakeholder interviews

XI. IMPLEMENTATION PLAN

Note: The Steering Committee is suggesting the following plan to implement the recommendations in this report. For this reason, it is labeled “Draft.” Before this Implementation Plan becomes final, the implementing entities will need to discuss and refine specific implementation details to ensure that the particular situations of each are met. Final implementation plans will be negotiated with members of the Washington Early Learning Partnership to ensure quick and effective action.

Taking Concerted Action

Overview. The recommendations in this report aim to create visible, durable and efficient methods to build an early learning system that can offer children what they need, when they need it, based on child and family requirements, and available resources.

This implementation plan describes how to put the State and Local Coordination Project recommendations in place. It shows how the different elements connect, suggests the steps to take and provides an estimate of the costs involved. Important aspects to keep in mind are:

1. The actions are interconnected and interdependent. Improving coordination requires new actions and connections between state agencies/organizations, between the state and regional groups, and among groups within each region. The plan refers to these as state-state, state-regional, and regional. As with an engine, if one part is not working, the engine will not run well.
2. Some actions will take place simultaneously at each level (Washington Early Learning Partnership, ELAC, and Early Learning Regional Coalitions). For example, the recommendations include developing statewide performance goals. DEL, the Partnership Group, ELAC, and the Regional Coalitions will each be involved in selecting the goals, the indicators, and a simple continuous quality improvement process to accelerate progress toward meeting the goals.
3. The actions are phased over the coming year to strike a balance between moving expeditiously to put these recommendations in place, and allowing state, regional and local early learning partners sufficient time to adopt these new structures and roles. If resources to support these changes are limited then the implementation plan could be phased in over a longer period of time.

Overview of implementation steps. The following table provides an overview of the proposed implementation plan steps for each of the recommendations in this report. The table also displays the steps according to the timing proposed: Near Term (1 – 2 months); Mid-Term (3 – 6 months); and Long-Term (7+ months).

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Table 13. Overview of Implementation Steps and Timing

Recommendation	Near-Term (1 – 2 months)	Mid-Term (3 – 6 months)	Long-Term (7+ months)
<i>Implementation of Overarching Recommendations</i>			
1. Adopt stakeholder engagement framework	Task 2. Use existing work planning processes to identify the type of stakeholder engagement to utilize with different projects	Task 1. Develop protocol to implement the stakeholder engagement framework	
		Task 3. Develop project plans for stakeholder engagement, based on work planning decisions	
		Task 4. Conduct stakeholder engagement process	Task 5. Communicate decisions to stakeholders (ongoing)
2. Adopt performance goals and indicators		Task 1. Develop draft goals and indicators	Task 3. Prepare final recommendations
		Task 2. Gather comments and input from affected stakeholders	Task 4. Decide on and communicate the Statewide Performance Goals and Indicators
			Task 5. Utilize a simple CQI process to review progress toward meeting performance goals (ongoing, with reports twice a year)
<i>Implementation of Washington Early Learning Partnership Recommendations</i>			
3. Invite DOH and DSHS to join Early Learning Partnership	Task 1. Invite DOH and DSHS leadership to participate in the partnership	Task 2. Involve DOH and DSHS leaders and directors as appropriate for the work	
4. Create annual priorities and develop consultation process with ELAC		Task 1. Develop process for engaging ELAC and regional coalitions in review and comment on partnership annual priorities	
5. Enhance communication between WELP and regional/local partners		Task 1. Create an online tool for posting current and future statewide initiatives and actions	

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Recommendation	Near-Term (1 – 2 months)	Mid-Term (3 – 6 months)	Long-Term (7+ months)
<i>Implementation of Early Learning Advisory Council Recommendations</i>			
6. Strengthen ELAC's function in the early learning system	Task 1. Adopt the Recommendations		
	Task 2. Confirm the ELAC staffing configuration and operations budget		
7. Clarify how ELAC will carry out more focused functions		Task 1. Create an Ad Hoc Transition Committee	
		Task 2. Create initial ELAC Work Plan	
		Task 3. Develop Council Charter, Ground Rules, Member Roles and Responsibilities	
		Task 4. Create the New Member Orientation Process	
		Task 5. Hold a Transition Retreat	
8. Expand ELAC membership	Task 1. Define the interim "Regional Advisor" role and the support needed		
	Task 2. Invite coalitions to identify a Regional Advisor to participate in ELAC	Task 3. Use the recommended nominations and appointments process to identify new members as terms for existing members expire	
			Task 4. Amend ELAC Authorizing Legislation to expand membership and further specify ELAC's role
<i>Implementation of Early Learning Regional Coalitions Recommendations</i>			
9. Strengthen Regional Coalitions		Task 1. Work with state-level partners to create a stable funding source for coalition capacity (ongoing)	
	Task 2. Establish a well-understood and accepted regional governance structure		
	Task 3. Ensure skilled and credible leadership		
		Task 4. Ensure credibility, relevance, and needed expertise and infrastructure	

Final Report and Recommendations

Recommendation	Near-Term (1 – 2 months)	Mid-Term (3 – 6 months)	Long-Term (7+ months)
10. Increase engagement of diverse stakeholders		Task 1. Articulate ways, in addition to membership, that parents, businesses, elected officials, and other interested parties can share their voice and affiliate with the coalition	
		Task 2. Engage communities of color in regional initiatives (ongoing)	
		Task 3. Engage other communities that are far from opportunity (ongoing)	
			Task 4. Engage people who make and influence decisions in the breadth of program areas that make up the region's early learning system (ongoing)
			Task 5. Raise public awareness of and participation in regional and state initiatives (ongoing)
11. Strengthen joint local-regional-state action	Task 1. Ensure a transparent, effective and aligned process for agenda setting		
		Task 2. Implement prioritized strategies through use of an <i>Action Plan</i>	
	Task 3. Select and support a regional advisor to participate in ELAC		
		Task 4. Promote use of statewide performance goals to assess how well we are doing in coordinating action and delivering results	
		Task 5. Establish/strengthen advocacy capacity	

Plan format. The implementation plan for each set of recommendations includes the following elements: (1) implementation steps; (2) supporting documents and processes; (3) cost and staffing implications; and (4) schedule. A sidebar next to each recommendation provides an at-a-glance guide to the recommendation and how it relates to implementation of the other recommendations. The sections of this sidebar are:

- **Function:** Which of the functions of the early learning system the recommendation addresses. This refers to the six essential functions of an early learning system, plus an initial function (Build Relationships and Agreements, Consider Stakeholder Input), which is foundational and enables the other functions to be effective (see Table 9, above).
- **Related implementation:** Which other level(s) of the early learning system will be implementing related steps. For quick reference, the sidebar uses the following icons for the three levels: state-level agencies, ELAC, and Regional Coalitions.



State



ELAC



Coalitions

- **Capacity Needs:** The approximate dollar amount needed, and whether this funding is in place now or is still needed.
- **Time Frame:** The plan suggests when to implement the recommendation, using three time frames:
 - Near Term: One to two months.
 - Mid-Term: Three to six months.
 - Long Term: Seven months or longer.

This implementation plan concludes with a summary budget (Tables 14 – 16).

Stakeholder Engagement Implementation Plan

Overview. It is recommended that DEL adopt a framework for engaging stakeholders in decisions the state must make to advance the goals of the *Early Learning Plan*. The framework suggests three types/levels of engagement keyed to the project’s needs. One of the objectives of this recommendation is to create a consistent approach to stakeholder engagement, so the various partners understand when and how stakeholders will be involved in providing advice about key decisions.

Implementation of Recommendation 1. Adopt stakeholder engagement framework.

Implementation steps. DEL will need to have discussions within its staff team about how to implement the framework on a consistent basis. Developing a protocol will help assure consistency in decision making about stakeholder engagement strategies. DEL may also need to discuss its approach to stakeholder engagement with Partnership members, depending on which agency is involved in the project.

Task 1. Develop protocol to implement the stakeholder engagement framework.

Action Steps:

- DEL briefs staff on the State and Local Coordination recommendations.
- DEL provides staff with examples describing the different types of

<p>Function</p> <p>0.5. Build Relationships; Consider Stakeholder Input</p>
<p>Related Implementation</p>

<p>engagement, including examples used during the past several years.</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> ➤ DEL confirms or refines the proposed “Six Questions for Choosing the Type of Stakeholder Engagement” (see Recommendation #1 above). ➤ DEL develops protocol for how decisions will be made regarding stakeholder engagement, seeking ELAC’s advice as needed. ➤ DEL shares the protocol with ELAC and Washington Early Learning Partnership members. 	<p>Capacity Needs Staff; possibly \$ with some types of engagement</p> <hr/> <p>Time Frame Mid-term & Long-term</p>
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Task 2. Use existing work planning processes to identify the type of stakeholder engagement to utilize with different projects.

Implementation steps. Much of the discussion about which type of stakeholder engagement to utilize for different projects can occur around two annual processes: developing the Early Learning Partnership’s annual priorities, and creating the ELAC work plan. The discussions about those plans can include considering the type of stakeholder engagement to utilize for each priority project. In addition, new initiatives or significant changes in policy or programs may develop during the course of a year, and may need some form of stakeholder engagement. In those circumstances, DEL can discuss the plans for stakeholder engagement with ELAC. If another Partnership agency is requesting the stakeholder engagement, they will have lead responsibility for supporting that stakeholder process.

Action Steps:

- DEL or the lead agency uses the partnership annual priorities process for discussions about the types of stakeholder engagement for major initiatives and changes.
- DEL or the lead agency uses the ELAC work plan process for discussions about stakeholder engagement for major initiatives and changes.
- As issues arise during the year, DEL, or as appropriate, Partnership agencies, discuss stakeholder engagement plans with ELAC.
- DEL or the lead agency identifies the appropriate level of engagement to use, and stakeholder groups to involve.

Task 3. Develop project plans for stakeholder engagement, based on work planning decisions.

Implementation steps. Once the decisions have been made about which type of engagement to pursue, the responsible entity develops project plans. In addition, a communication plan needs to inform stakeholders about when and how different levels of engagement will take place. The existing communication methods/structures can inform communities about the approach to stakeholder engagement. When targeted outreach would be useful, there will need to be some community-specific communication strategies.

Action Steps:

- The responsible entity develops a project plan for stakeholder engagement.
- The responsible entity develops communications strategy for each stakeholder engagement effort.
- The responsible entity identifies resources needed to carry out stakeholder engagement.

Task 4. Conduct stakeholder engagement process.

Action Steps:

- DEL or the responsible entity carries out the agreed upon stakeholder engagement plan.
- DEL or the responsible entity summarizes comments received and major themes.

Task 5. Communicate decisions to stakeholders.

Implementation steps. Once decisions have been made, the lead department/agency develops a response to those who participated in the stakeholder engagement process. The response includes the nature of the final decisions and how stakeholder comments influenced those decisions. The communications also provide an explanation of issues that were raised but not addressed in the final decision.

Action Step:

- Responsible entity communicates final decisions and how stakeholder comments were used/incorporated.

Supporting documents and processes

- **Confirmed or refined questions** for using different levels of stakeholder engagement. See the “Six Questions” in Recommendation #1. DEL staff reviews and modifies as needed.
- **Protocol for DEL decision making** about stakeholder engagement. The protocol identifies steps necessary to make a decision. For example: (a) determine which type of engagement to use; (b) when to have discussions with Partnership and ELAC; (c) how to make mid-year decisions about stakeholder engagement as new initiatives arise; and (d) decision making authorities within DEL.
- **Early Learning Partnership Annual Priorities and ELAC Work Plan**, with level of stakeholder engagement identified, as appropriate.
- **Written schedule and process for project-based stakeholder engagement.** The documents identify which stakeholders need to be involved; create a schedule and process for engagement; frame key questions to address during stakeholder engagement; and identify resources needed to carry out the engagement.
- **Communications plan.** The plan identifies: when/how key stakeholders will be informed; communication strategies for each level of stakeholder engagement to encourage stakeholders to be involved; and methods for receiving stakeholder input.
- **Explanation of Decisions.** The document provides a written description to inform stakeholders regarding final decisions and how comments were incorporated.

Cost and staffing implications. There are no additional costs for Task 1 or Task 2. There could be costs associated with Task 3, depending on the type of stakeholder engagement used. For example, any needed translation services, or consultant assistance in carrying out a broad stakeholder engagement process (such as in developing the *Early Learning Plan*) would require additional resources. There is a need for staff resources to draft a proposed schedule and process, review it with the Partnership and ELAC, and work to incorporate the comments from the review process, and communicate back to stakeholders about the final decision.

Schedule. Mid-term for Tasks 1 and 3, near-term for Task 2, and ongoing for Tasks 4 and 5. The review with DEL staff and the development of protocol can occur by mid-2013. The ELAC work plan discussions can take place in the near-term, and long-term for discussions about the Partnership annual priorities. The Partnership annual priorities process will not occur until the fourth quarter of 2013 and into the beginning of 2014. The development of plans related to the ELAC work plan can take place mid-term. As mentioned above, ELAC will develop its first work plan by mid-2013. Long-term for the developing plans related to the Early Learning Partnership’s annual priorities. Conducting stakeholder engagement as needed and communicating decisions are ongoing.

Performance Goals Implementation Plan

The proposed selection of statewide performance goals provides an opportunity for state and regional partners to collaborate on putting this important new piece of the statewide early learning system in place. Because the purpose of the performance goals is to focus collective action, the process to select the goals should be collaborative, including review and discussions with ELAC, Regional Coalitions and interested stakeholders. Although DEL, and perhaps other Early Learning Partnership agencies, will be the final decision makers regarding the selection of performance goals, regional partners must embrace the goals if meaningful progress is going to be made at both the state and regional levels.

The implementation includes a public engagement process to get stakeholder comments. The following implementation actions assume that DEL uses a “consultation process” to develop the performance goals (see recommendations on Stakeholder Engagement).

Implementation of Recommendation 2. Adopt performance goals and indicators.

Task 1. Develop draft goals and indicators.

Implementation steps. DEL staff takes the lead in developing an initial draft (*preliminary list*) for review. The draft is mindful of the criteria the recommendations suggest (for example, the goal requires both state and local actions to be successful; data are available to monitor progress). The draft is developed using the state’s *Early Learning Plan*, review of agency and ELAC work plans, the Washington Early Learning Partnership’s *Annual Priorities*, grant objectives, and other pertinent work efforts. In addition, the draft goals include areas where early success is possible, in order to build momentum. The preliminary draft also includes a simple continuous quality improvement process (CQI) for use by the Early Learning Regional Coalitions, and others who choose to participate (such as community service agencies).

Action Steps:

- DEL staff members develop a *Preliminary List of Potential Performance Goals and Indicators*.
- DEL reviews preliminary list with Early Learning Partnership, and creates an ELAC committee (including representation from the Regional Coalitions) to review and comment. The committee works with DEL to recommend a draft *Prioritized List of Potential Performance Goals and Indicators*, along with the intended results.

<p>Function</p> <p>1. Set Standards, Goals & Outcome; 6. Be Accountable for Achieving Outcomes</p>
<p>Related Implementation</p> 
<p>Capacity Needs</p> <p>Additional staff or consultant needed during development; Ongoing staffing needed.</p>
<p>Time Frame</p> <p>Mid-Term</p>

Task 2. Gather comments and input from affected stakeholders.

Implementation steps. DEL works with the newly established ELAC committee to develop a plan, and then conducts a consultation process (as defined in the Stakeholder Engagement recommendations) to gather comments from affected stakeholders on the *Prioritized List of Potential Performance Goals and Indicators*. It will be important to engage the Early Learning Regional Coalitions in the public comment process, since they represent local viewpoints (providing a perspective that is closest to children and families, providers and teachers, and other stakeholders), and they understand the unique needs in their regions.

Action Steps:

- DEL works with ELAC committee, which will include representatives from the Early Learning Regional Coalitions, to design a consultation process for outreach, including intentional engagement activities with stakeholders most affected.
- DEL and ELAC conduct outreach with stakeholders, engaging Regional Coalitions and others.
- DEL prepares a summary of comments and reactions to the prioritized list of performance goals and indicators.

Task 3. Prepare final recommendations.

Implementation steps. Once the consultation process is completed, the ELAC committee works with DEL staff (or Early Learning Partnership members, as appropriate) to revise and finalize recommendations.

Action Steps:

- The ELAC committee considers the public comments, discusses any possible modifications, and develops final recommendations for *Statewide Performance Goals and Indicators*.
- The committee forwards its recommendations to ELAC for final recommendation to DEL (and the Early Learning Partnership members, as appropriate) for decisions.
- Final decisions include identifying lead responsibility for collecting data, supporting partners in implementing the simple CQI process, and reporting on the performance goals and indicators.

Task 4. Decide on and communicate the Statewide Performance Goals and Indicators.

Action Steps:

- DEL and/or possibly another lead state agency make final decisions on performance goals.
- DEL and/or lead state agency develop and implement a communications plan to inform state, regional and local early learning stakeholders about the decisions regarding the final *Statewide Performance Goals and Indicators*.
- DEL and/or lead state agency communicate the reasons underlying the decision, how stakeholder comments were used or influenced the decisions, and plans to develop and support implementation of a simple CQI process.

Task 5. Utilize a simple CQI process to review progress toward meeting performance goals.

Action Steps:

- DEL staff, working with partner agency staff and Regional Coalitions, as appropriate, create a simple CQI process and a plan for supporting partners in implementing the CQI process.
- DEL staff, working with partnership agency staff as appropriate, provide updated data for CQI use and progress reports twice a year—at mid-year and again at year-end.
- DEL, ELAC, the Partnership and the Regional Coalitions use the reports as the basis for discussions about quality improvements, including any needed program changes, process improvements, or modifications to policies.
- The Partnership and ELAC use the reports to inform development of the next year's performance goals and indicators, and the annual ELAC work plan and annual Partnership priorities.
- DEL and/or partnership members report progress to early learning stakeholders and the public in a transparent fashion.

Supporting documents and processes

- **Preliminary List of Potential Performance Goals and Indicators** (matched with suggested selection criteria) developed by DEL staff and a simple CQI process to review with ELAC and the Early Learning Partnership.
- **Prioritized List of Potential Performance Goals and Indicators** developed by ELAC committee for review with the Early Learning Partnership and ELAC, and ready for public review.
- **Consultation process** for gathering comments from affected stakeholders, including a strategy for reaching rural and ethnic communities. The lead entity develops materials for outreach, and summary of comments received.
- **Summary of committee and ELAC recommendations.**
- **Final decisions** by DEL, and possibly Early Learning Partnership members, for *Statewide Performance Goals and Indicators* include explanation of any decisions different than ELAC recommendations, and identification of lead responsibility for tracking and reporting.
- **Communications plan** and materials for communicating final decisions.
- Simple **CQI process** with a common **template/format for reporting on progress**, and a plan to support partners in implementing the CQI process.

Cost and staffing implications. The implementation plan for ELAC addresses the need to fully staff and support ELAC. Creating performance goals and indicators will require staff resources (and/or consultants in the first year) to: (1) manage the development of the preliminary list; (2) draft the recommendations; (3) staff the ELAC committee and the stakeholder engagement (consultation process); (4) support the committee and staff in developing final recommendations; and (5) provide technical assistance to the regional coalitions to implement the CQI process. DEL staff, working with partnership agency staff as appropriate, can prepare the progress reports.

Schedule. Develop the *Preliminary List of Potential Performance Goals and Indicators* in the mid-term. Develop the recommendations and *Prioritized List of Potential Performance Goals and Indicators* in the mid-term. Gather and summarize affected stakeholder comments in the mid-term. Develop final recommendations in the long-term. Communicate the new performance goals and indicators to the

early learning community in the long-term. Create the progress reports in the long-term. Tracking will continue on an ongoing basis, with reports at mid-year and year-end.

Washington Early Learning Partnership Implementation Plan

Overview. It is recommended that the state continue to build upon the Washington Early Learning Partnership, created in 2009 by a joint resolution of the members. The partnership is one of the cornerstones of enhancing coordination between state and local partners, among state agencies, and with private funders.

Implementation of Recommendation 3. Invite DOH and DSHS to join Early Learning Partnership.

Implementation steps. With the change in administration in state government, there is an opportunity to work with new leadership in the state agencies. The Joint Resolution was created by the participating members and, therefore, can be amended by them. It does not require legislative approval.

Task 1. Invite DOH and DSHS leadership to participate in the partnership.

Action Steps:


- DEL leadership confirms with the Governor’s staff the approach to invite/encourage DOH and DSHS to join the partnership.
- The leadership of the current partnership agencies co-signs a letter to invite DOH and DSHS to join the partnership, explaining the purpose and role of the partnership. Partnership leadership conducts personal communication with leaders at DOH and DSHS.
- Assuming one or both departments agree to join the partnership, the partners draft and sign an amendment to the Joint Resolution.
- The partners select key legislative and/or community forums where all partners can participate in presentations to foster greater understanding about the new partnership (similar to presentations made by DEL, OSPI and Thrive leadership in the past two years).

Task 2. Involve DOH and DSHS leaders and directors as appropriate for the work.

Implementation steps. The department leadership, and the division directors and managers overseeing programs that are considered part of the early learning system participate in the Early Learning Partnership. Currently, DEL, OSPI and Thrive leadership and directors/managers participate in the monthly meetings. The Secretaries of DOH and DSHS participate on a periodic basis, as issues arise on the partnership agenda (estimated between two and four times each year), while the DOH and DSHS leadership participate monthly.

Action Steps:

- Once leadership at DOH and DSHS have agreed to participate in the Partnership, they identify directors and managers in each department who will participate in monthly partnership meetings.

<p>Function</p> <p>0.5. Build Relationships; Consider Stakeholder Input</p> <p>1. Set Standards, Goals & Outcomes</p> <p>2. Choose Strategies & Priorities</p> <p>6. Be Accountable for Achieving Outcomes</p>
<p>Related Implementation</p> 
<p>Capacity Needs</p> <p>Continuation of roughly the same level of resources needed</p>
<p>Time Frame</p> <p>Mid-Term</p>

- The Partnership creates an ad hoc transition staff work group to assist in incorporating the staff and identifying key issues from the two new partnership agencies. The ad hoc group includes one staff member from each of the partnership members, and lasts as long as the work group members feel it is providing value.
- The Partnership prepares background materials, and briefs leadership and directors on expectations for participation and background about the Partnership. Initial briefings include discussions about the role of lead agencies and the role of other partnership members in the annual priorities.
- The Partnership identifies the range of topics (in addition to the 2013 annual priorities) that partnership members would like to discuss with DOH and/or DSHS. Begin to include those topics on the partnership agendas.

Supporting documents and processes

- New Partner **Invitation Letter**.
- Amended **Joint Resolution**.
- **Briefing materials** for DSHS and DOH leadership and directors.
Content Elements: annual priorities, sample agendas, sample meeting summaries, summary of Early Learning Plan, Partnership Ground Rules, etc.

Cost and staffing implications. The facilitator for the current partnership meetings is a neutral party. Thrive provides funding to support that facilitation. No additional cost or staffing would be required to carry out this recommendation. There is no added expenditure to perform the other tasks.

Schedule. With newly-appointed leadership of DOH and DSHS in place in the first quarter 2013, the new partnership members could be in place and the Joint Resolution amended in the mid-term. DOH and/or DSHS should begin participating in the partnership meetings once each agrees – in the mid-term.

Implementation of Recommendation 4. Continue annual priorities and develop consultation process with ELAC.

Implementation steps. The current Early Learning Partnership identifies annual priorities the members work on jointly. By consulting with ELAC and the Regional Coalitions before finalizing their annual priorities, the Partnership will be able to hear comments from statewide, regional and local partners before finalizing the priorities. The Partnership also informs ELAC and the Regional Coalitions as they develop their annual work plans and priorities. As part of the adoption process, the Partnership agrees upon topics of common interest for which to ask ELAC's advice.

Task 1. Develop process for engaging ELAC and regional coalitions in review and comment on partnership annual priorities.

Action Steps:

- The Partnership creates a schedule and process for developing its annual priorities that includes consultation with ELAC and the Regional Coalitions (through their participation on ELAC). The schedule needs to accommodate the fact that the executive branch typically establishes legislative priorities in November, and the annual priorities should be available to share with the incoming Legislature by mid-January.

- The Partnership initiates discussions among its members, and with ELAC, regarding the method and timing for periodic review of progress achieved on the state's *Early Learning Plan* strategies and outcomes.

Supporting documents and processes.

- **Written schedule and process** for establishing partnership annual priorities.
- Draft and final **partnership annual priorities**.

Cost and staffing implications. There is no additional cost to carry out this recommendation. Staff resources will be required to draft a proposed schedule and process, review it with the partnership, ELAC and Regional Coalition representatives, and work to incorporate the various comments, as appropriate, during the review process.

Schedule. Mid-term. This recommendation should target the 2014 annual priorities as the first year of implementation of the new schedule and process. Develop the proposed schedule and process in the summer of 2013, with agreement by the partnership in early fall 2013. Develop the annual priorities between October 2013 and early January 2014.

Implementation of Recommendation 5. Enhance communication between Washington Early Learning Partnership and regional and local early learning partners.

Task 1. Create an online tool for posting current and future statewide initiatives and actions.

Action Steps:

- The Partnership conducts discussions with ELAC about the kind of information that would be most useful to include.
- The Partnership creates a template for the calendar of activities; discusses that template with representatives from ELAC and Regional Coalitions.
- The Partnership establishes and DEL posts the calendar on its website. The Partnership encourages other agencies and partners to link to the online calendar.
- The Partnership updates the schedule on a quarterly basis; members' leadership teams identify new actions as they arise.

Supporting documents and processes

- **Draft template** of schedule.
- Final version of schedule and **proposed method of communication**.

Cost and staffing implications. There is no additional cost to carry out this recommendation. Communication staff from the partnership organizations will need to discuss the concept with ELAC, draft a template, post the final schedule, and update it quarterly based on information the partnership members' leadership teams provide.

Schedule. Mid-term, after ELAC has made a transition to its new role and membership.

Early Learning Advisory Council Implementation Plan

Overview. Project recommendations call for substantially strengthening ELAC’s state-to-local coordination function in order to promote joint state and regional action, and continuous improvement of services, systems and results for children and families. The changes will:

- Extend ELAC’s reach and connections to key stakeholders and those closest to families by selecting members affiliated with regional and statewide associations and groups, such as the Early Learning Regional Coalitions, the Head Start ECEAP parent ambassadors, Child Care Aware of Washington, and the Association of Washington School Principals.
- Promote mutual understanding and learning about state and regional needs, perspectives and priorities, as well as associated challenges and solutions by deepening the understanding of the different experiences of Washington’s diverse geographic, ethnic and cultural communities, including those furthest from opportunity.
- Galvanize joint action across state and local communities by fostering two-way communication of state and regional priorities, issues and innovations among ELAC members and their networks, and by identifying joint priorities and performance goals.

Realizing ELAC’s potential in this next development phase of Washington’s early learning system will require a marked shift in culture and roles. The characteristics required for a successful transition and increasing ELAC’s value include:

- A *Work Plan* that addresses important, substantive issues that engage members.
- Adequate committees, committee members and staffing to be successful in making strategic recommendations that inform decisions in meaningful ways, and fostering joint action among members and partners.
- Shared ownership and commitment to the new roles, structures and processes.
- A tangible and positive return on investment that allows members to see the value of their investment of time and energy.

Sequencing. The recommended changes will require shifts in ELAC’s operating processes and culture. Gradual shifts can create uncertainty and typically take longer to effect a transition. With this in mind, the *ELAC Implementation Plan* recommends phasing the transition in five steps:

1. Adopt the project’s Final Recommendations, including ELAC’s function and roles, and confirm the *Implementation Plan* and timing.
2. Create an initial *Work Plan* and guiding documents.
3. Engage Early Learning Regional Coalition representatives in ELAC, initially as “ELAC Regional Advisors” until the authorizing legislation can be amended.
4. Conduct a transition retreat marking the change from the old to the new way of working, subsequently initiating the new structure, roles and operating processes.
5. Amend the authorizing legislation to enable expanding ELAC’s membership.

The following implementation steps for each of the three ELAC recommendations reflect this phasing. A suggested schedule is included at the end of this section of the *Implementation Plan*.

Implementation of Recommendation 6. Strengthen ELAC’s function in the early learning system.

Implementation steps. ELAC recommends adoption of the State and Local Coordination Project recommendations, including the strengthened ELAC functions and roles.

Task 1. Adopt the Recommendations.

Action Steps:

- Steering Committee forwards this project’s recommendations to ELAC for discussion and recommendation.
- ELAC makes its recommendation to DEL and the Washington Early Learning Partnership.
- The partnership approves the recommendations.

Task 2. Confirm the ELAC staffing configuration and operations budget.

Action Steps:

- DEL identifies needed ELAC staffing and a meetings/operations budget for ELAC.
- DEL communicates the staffing configuration and meetings/operations budget to ELAC.


ELAC staffing, staff configuration and costs. Appropriate staffing and a modest operations budget are key elements in ELAC’s transition into a council of high-level members who recommend improvements regarding complex, system-building issues, and who promote joint state, local and cross-sector action.

It is recommended that ELAC be staffed by a highly skilled full-time lead ELAC staff position and a half-time (0.5 FTE) administrative support position.

Issues upon which ELAC advice will likely be sought span state agencies, DEL divisions, multiple fields and professions, and communities. Because of this, the responsibility for ELAC should be vested at a level within DEL that has agency-wide purview, has the ability to see issues and direct action across the agency, and commands the respect of high-level colleagues in other state agencies and stakeholder groups.

The responsibilities of the ELAC lead staff position include:

- Developing and maintaining partnerships with state and community-level constituents.
- Supporting ELACs ongoing development, implementation of the *ELAC Work Plan* and joint action among cross-sector partners to advance the *State Early Learning Plan* and the *ELAC Work Plan*.
- Facilitating development of performance goals and related CQI processes and reporting.
- Facilitating stakeholder engagement processes, stakeholder engagement in ELAC, and regular updating of the Partnership Group calendar of state-level initiatives.
- Communicating ELAC and ELP accomplishments, needs, questions and issues to agency executive leadership, as well as to key partner agencies, and preparing reports and records relevant to the operation of ELAC and the ELP.

<p>Function</p> <p>0.5. Build Relationships and Agreements</p>
<p>Related Implementation</p> 
<p>Capacity Needs</p> <p>Will require maintaining current FTE capacity.</p>
<p>Time Frame</p> <p>Near Term & Mid-Term</p>

Key skills and experience needed for this position include:

- Demonstrated experience facilitating small- and large-group processes, fostering deliberation and confirming agreements. Ability to use past and current agreements to guide action of a collaborative body and ensure results.
- Excellent interpersonal and communication skills to foster collaboration, thoughtful consideration and credibility of ELAC’s deliberative processes and communication with stakeholders.
- Sophisticated planning, policy and data analysis skills to identify and present complex issues to ELAC, and to support ELAC in using data to develop informed advice and system building recommendations.
- Excellent organizational and project management skills, and the ability to support groups of diverse individuals (perspective, experience, interest and knowledge) to develop and execute agendas, work plans and time sensitive projects.

A federal grant, which ends in the summer of 2013, currently supports ELAC staffing and meeting expenses. Additional funds and fund sources will need to be identified to support continued staffing and operations costs.

Schedule. Near-term. ELAC should confirm the functions and roles in the early spring of 2013. DEL should establish the ELAC staffing capacity and configuration, and the meeting/operations budget for the remainder of 2013 by May 2013 so that this can be considered in plans for the initial implementation and work plan.

Implementation of Recommendation 7. Clarify how ELAC will carry out more focused functions.

The State and Local Coordination recommendations include establishing a *Council Charter, Committee Charter Template, Member Roles and Responsibilities*, and a *Work Plan* for ELAC. The *Charter* will articulate ELAC’s purpose, structure and operating processes. Clearly articulating and documenting *Member Roles and Responsibilities* for Council Co-chairs, Committee Chairs and members promotes effective representation, sets clear expectations and fosters active participation. The *Work Plan* will engender discussion and agreement about the most important topics for ELAC’s deliberation, and the time and intention to engage members and stakeholders.

Creating these guiding documents early in the process of re-visioning ELAC can foster ownership and build momentum. The guiding documents also will serve as the basis for a transitional retreat that will mark the shift from the old way of working to the new structures, roles and processes.

Implementation steps. DEL works with ELAC to create the ELAC Guiding Documents. ELAC creates an initial *Work Plan* as an early action, even before the State and Local Coordination Project recommendations are adopted. DEL and ELAC conduct a transition retreat with the objective that ELAC members, agency leaders and key staff are each prepared to play their role in the transition to their new roles and operating processes immediately following the retreat.

Function
0.5. Build Relationships and Agreements

Task 1. Create an Ad Hoc Transition Committee.


Action Step:

- DEL and ELAC establish an ELAC Transition Committee to develop the guiding documents and support the transition. An eight-member committee is recommended at least five of whom are ELAC members and proposed Advisors to ELAC, plus Partnership agency representatives.

Task 2. Create initial ELAC Work Plan – Early Action.

Action Steps:

- DEL prepares a list of initial issues/tasks, including the timeline and desired advice and recommendations, for ELAC’s first *Work Plan*, in consultation with the partnership.
- DEL asks for comment, input and additional ideas from ELAC and the coalitions.
- ELAC considers the potential *Work Plan* items and committees needed to execute the work, and the appropriate level of stakeholder engagement for each work plan item, and provides feedback to DEL.
- ELAC considers and recommends state-level committees and initiatives with which ELAC should be connected, the purposes for the connection, and the form of connection, such as shared members, liaisons and briefings.
- ELAC considers and recommends issues and initiatives in addition to those in the work plan, for which ELAC needs to be knowledgeable and up-to-date to fulfill its functions of informing decisions in meaningful ways; and promoting joint actions that cross-sector partners can take to improve services.
- ELAC and DEL mutually agree on the ELAC *Work Plan*. If other agencies are involved in the plans, they should mutually agree with DEL and ELAC on that part of the work plan.
- ELAC creates committees and committee charters as needed to execute the work plan, paying careful attention to creating early successes.
- At the outset of planning for the second annual *ELAC Work Plan*, ELAC reflects upon what went well in the prior year and what could be improved upon. The second annual work plan may include refinement of the guiding documents and operating processes. In addition, the Executive Committee prepares and recommends to ELAC key considerations for adoption of subsequent work plans.

<p>Related Implementation</p> 
<p>Capacity Needs</p> <p>Ongoing staffing will be needed. Additional short-term consultation and facilitation will be needed.</p>
<p>Time Frame</p> <p>Near-Term for Work Plan. Mid- Term for Charter, Roles & Responsibilities, Committee Charter, and New Member Orientation. Mid-Term (7/13) for Transition Retreat. Long-term for the second annual work plan.</p>

Task 3. Develop the Council Charter, Ground Rules, Member Roles and Responsibilities.

Action Steps:

- The Transition Committee works with DEL and ELAC to confirm the purposes, content and uses of the guiding documents.
- The Transition Committee drafts the *ELAC Charter, Committee Charter Template, and Member Roles and Responsibilities* for ELAC’s discussion and recommendation, and DEL approval.

- ELAC adopts and DEL confirms the *Charter, Committee Charter Template, and Member Roles and Responsibilities*.

Task 4. Create the New Member Orientation Process.

Action Steps:

- The Transition Committee reviews and confirms the new member orientation process recommendations.
- The Transition Committee drafts a recommended orientation process and items to be included in the new ELAC Member Handbook.
- ELAC and DEL confirm the process and handbook elements. The ELAC staff team prepares the handbooks, and plans and staffs the orientation process for new members and Regional Advisors.

Task 5. Hold a Transition Retreat.

Action Steps:

- DEL and the Transition Committee identify the timeframe and a facilitator for the retreat.
- Ten weeks in advance of the retreat, the Transition Committee schedules the date and begins planning. The committee identifies three to four of its members, including DEL staff, to work with the facilitator to propose objectives for the retreat to ELAC and to DEL.
- After the retreat objectives are approved, the facilitator and the Retreat Planning Group work with the Transition Committee and DEL to prepare the retreat plan and materials.
- DEL and the Transition Committee hold the retreat.

Task 6. Institute strengthened functions and processes.

Action Steps:

- ELAC elects the co-chairs, if not done at the retreat.
- CEL and ELAC identify ELAC's ad hoc and standing committees needed to execute the work plan, and create committee charters.
- DEL and ELAC identify committee chairs and members who can best carry out the roles and responsibilities.

Supporting documents and processes

- **The ELAC Charter** includes: ELAC's purposes; advisory relationships; leadership and member roles; decision making processes; committee structure and roles; and operating procedures, such as the setting of work plans and agendas; establishing committees; and establishing liaisons between ELAC and key related initiatives and groups.
- The **Committee Charter Template** includes: the committee purpose; roles of committee chair and members (as well as desirable expertise and demographic representation); requirements and or parameters (such as the product or recommendation that will result from the committee's work); the timeline; and the staffing that available to the committee.
- **Member Roles and Responsibilities** include the roles and responsibilities of the co-chairs, committee chairs and members. Examples might include a shared commitment:
 - a. To the Early Learning Plan's vision of "accessible, accountable and developmentally and culturally appropriate" system that "partners with families to ensure that every child is healthy, capable and confident in school and in life."
 - b. To be conduits of two-way communications.

- c. To represent the perspectives of constituencies and sectors rather than their own or their organization's interests.
- d. To work together to promote alignment of private and public sector actions, objectives and resources so that Washington's early learning system affords children and families access to what they need, when and where they need it.
- **The Initial ELAC Work Plan** describes: the tasks, timelines, desired results, leads and partners. The work plan has a one- to two-year time frame, as best fits the time horizon of the tasks. The work plan includes sections for: other topics upon which ELAC needs ongoing information and/or briefings; the state-level committees and initiatives to which ELAC will be connected; and the purposes and form of those connections. ELAC reviews and revises the work plan annually. ELAC and DEL mutually agree upon the *ELAC Work Plan*. As the Regional Advisors from the Regional Coalitions join ELAC, consideration should be given to adding topics to the *Work Plan*. For topics where other state agencies are seeking ELAC's advice, those agencies should approve relevant sections of the *Work Plan*.
- **ELAC Connections with Related State-Level Committees and Initiatives** is a list of the liaisons ELAC establishes with related initiatives and committees, such as the State Interagency Coordinating Council.

Cost and staffing implications. Creating and adopting the guiding documents by June 2013 will require focused staffing, writing and facilitation. The State and Local Coordination Project consultant team will provide this support with funds available for this purpose through the federal State Advisory Council grant.

DEL should engage a facilitator to help plan and facilitate the transition retreat. Doing so will bring additional time and expertise to planning and structuring the event, and will help ELAC, agency leaders and staff in achieving the retreat objectives. In addition, the members of the Transition Committee, including DEL staff, should participate in two to three retreat planning meetings.

Other staff costs will be similar to planning for an intensive ELAC meeting, so no additional staff time is required. Meetings costs will be similar to a regular ELAC meeting. The retreat should take place at the June 2013 ELAC meeting. Facilitation will be an additional expense to come from the State Advisory Council grant.

Schedule. Mid-term for the Guiding Documents and Transition Retreat. DEL and ELAC should complete the above steps by July 2013 so that the transition to the new roles, structures and processes can take place as soon as possible. This time frame will maintain momentum, and enable the State and Local Coordination Project consultant team to assist with transition staffing and developing the guiding documents while federal grant funds are available. ELAC completes its second annual *Work Plan* the following year (long-term).

Implementation of Recommendation 8. Expand ELAC membership.

Bolstering ELAC's function as the primary state-local coordination mechanism is core to improving state and local coordination, and ultimately results for children. For this reason, ELAC's membership should be expanded to include representatives from each of the Regional Coalitions, connections with statewide networks and associations should be fortified through other members' affiliations.

As an interim measure, Regional Coalition representatives should join ELAC as “Regional Advisors” in time to for them to participate in the Transition Retreat. The new process for nominations and appointments should be implemented to fill all upcoming positions, as allowed by existing law. A maximum term of two years should be considered for these positions, consistent with member terms, in case the authorizing language is not amended within the two-year period. If this occurs, it is recommended that the Regional Coalitions be asked to identify new Regional Advisors or reconfirm the existing individuals.

Expanding ELAC’s membership will require amending ELAC’s authorizing language. When drafting the amendment, DEL should consider both expansion of ELAC membership and further delineation of roles. The Early Learning Partnership should also consider the amendment, as these agencies may also request ELAC’s advice.

Implementation steps. DEL, Thrive and the 10 Regional Coalitions consult about the potential for supporting Early Learning Regional Coalition representatives to participate in ELAC in an interim “Regional Advisor” role.

Task 1. Define the interim “Regional Advisor” role and the support needed.

Action Steps:

- The Transition Committee crafts the “Regional Advisor” roles and responsibilities, including a communications protocol for two-way information sharing as part of the development of the guiding documents, then solicits comments from the coalitions. DEL considers and incorporates comments, and prepares a recommended protocol for ELAC adoption.
- Public and private funding partners work with the coalitions to identify and provide technical and financial support necessary to allow coalitions to participate in ELAC and for related capacity building.

Task 2. Invite coalitions to identify a Regional Advisor to participate in ELAC.

Action Step:

- DEL and ELAC invite each of the 10 Early Learning Regional Coalitions to designate a representative to serve as an interim ELAC “Regional Advisor” in time to participate in the ELAC transition event.

Task 3. Use the recommended nominations and appointments process to identify new members as terms for existing members expire.


Action Step:

- For terms that conclude on June 30, 2013, DEL solicits nominations from appropriate groups and networks, as noted on *Recommended ELAC Membership* (Table 10) in the Recommendations section.

Task 4. Amend ELAC Authorizing Legislation to expand membership and further specify ELAC’s roles.

Action Steps:

- DEL and ELAC consider recommended roles and membership expansion.
- DEL and ELAC decide on roles and members to request in amended legislation, and consider requesting authority for immediate implementation so as to add new members sooner.

<p>Function</p> <p>0.5. Build Relationships and Agreements.</p>
<p>Related Implementation</p> 
<p>Capacity Needs</p> <p>Additional funding to support new regional advisor/ member travel & per diem costs will be needed.</p>
<p>Time Frame</p> <p>Near-Term for Regional Advisors.</p> <p>Mid-Term for Regional Advisor Communication Protocol.</p> <p>2014 for Amendment of Authorizing Legislation.</p>

- The state amends legislation; DEL and ELAC implement changes.

Cost and staffing implications. There would be a small incremental cost for adding Regional Advisors and new members, related to the increase in the number of ELAC participants. The modest increased costs would result from travel and per diem costs for interim Regional Advisors and new members to attend six ELAC meetings and six committee meetings per year. Capacity-building costs are included in the steps for implementing the Early Learning Regional Coalition changes, in the next section of this *Implementation Plan*.

Schedule. Identify Regional Advisors or new members in the near-term, so they can participate in a June ELAC retreat, marking the transition to the new roles, structures and processes in June 2013. Solicit coalition input on the Regional Advisor Communication Protocol in the mid-term, and finalize the protocol. This is suggested so that the Regional Advisors can be involved in soliciting comments and finalizing the protocols.

Early Learning Regional Coalitions Implementation Plan

Overview. The State and Local Coordination Project recommendations suggest strengthening the regional work that has been done to date by the Infant-Toddler Regions and the Early Learning Regional Coalitions. The coalitions are in the process of integrating their efforts and building their capacity to coordinate local early learning efforts. While the specific recommendations relate to actions the regions can take to build this new structure for joint state and local action, ELAC and the Washington Early Learning Partnership will be undertaking related and interdependent work in tandem. Their steps are noted in the prior sections of this *Implementation Plan*. Since DEL Infant Toddler and Thrive Community Momentum grants have supported all regions' early elements of this work, many important elements are already in place or developing. Implementing these recommendations will require regional assessment of existing capacity and putting enhancements in place based upon new roles. Some of these revisions may require additional resources, notably for strengthening outreach and engagement capacity.

Implementation of Recommendation 9. Strengthen Regional Coalitions.

Implementation steps. Coalitions have many successful elements on which to build. The following steps suggest necessary strengthening to ensure the ongoing ability of the coalition to participate in joint early learning action. Many of these tasks are already part of the recent Community Momentum grants. However, technical assistance plans for individual Regional Coalitions may need to be revised to help coalitions to achieve all of these articulated capacity-building elements. Additionally, state partners will need to be sensitive and responsive to the need for temporary or permanent funding that is part of strengthening.

Task 1. Work with state-level partners to create a stable funding source for coalition capacity.

Action Steps:

- DEL, Thrive by Five Washington and other partners work with Regional Coalitions to identify and secure long-range funding for basic coalition

Function
0.5. Build Relationships and Agreements & Consider Stakeholder Input
Related Implementation
None
Capacity Needs
Continued funding to maintain

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capacity as well as “developmental” funding for those regions that are still developing important parts of their infrastructure.

- Each Regional Coalition discusses elements of regional infrastructure and initiatives for which they will jointly seek sustaining funding, as distinct from independent organization fund development.

individual coalition capacity will be needed
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Time Frame

Near-Term & Mid-Term

Task 2. Establish a well-understood and accepted regional governance structure.

Action Steps:

- Each Regional Coalition completes integration of Infant Toddler Region Steering Committee and other “initiative work,” articulating committee structures and executive functions for the coalition.
- Each Regional Coalition names the authority, responsibility and relationships among its Coordinator, leadership structure, committees, point people, members and other stakeholders.
- Each Regional Coalition negotiates and documents the process it will use to make regional coordination decisions, noting types of issues to be addressed, opportunities for input, consultation required, steps in making decisions and distribution of work.
- Each Regional Coalition negotiates and agrees on the reasons for their collaboration, naming goals and commitments in the form of a charter, bylaws or other document.
- Each Regional Coalition establishes a process for storing and making available minutes, agreements and plans documenting its decisions and planned action.
- Each Regional Coalition establishes a process that can allow local input to be gathered for setting agendas, notifying partners of decisions to be made, and briefing regional representatives on local and topical needs, ideas and decisions.

Task 3. Ensure skilled and credible leadership.

Action Steps:

- Each Regional Coalition assesses the level of staffing and leadership structure oversight it needs to ensure effective collaboration and dedicate adequate resources to ensure consistency.
- Each Regional Coalition defines the knowledge, skills and attributes that a Regional Coordinator, leadership team members and the regional ELAC representative need to: represent the coalition effectively; foster effective working relationships; and drive collaborative action.
- Each Regional Coalition cultivates, selects and develops these skills among candidates for coalition leadership positions.

Task 4. Ensure credibility, relevance, and needed expertise and infrastructure.

Action Steps:

- Each Regional Coalition periodically reflects on the health, progress and effectiveness of the coalition, its processes and actions.
- Each Regional Coalition establishes capacity, and cultivates members or other partners who can support the use of anecdotal and quantitative data to support decisions.
- Each Regional Coalition establishes a process for regional members to remain abreast of regional and state policy-making processes and priorities.

Supporting documents and processes

- **Characteristics of Effective Coalitions** – This document can serve as a guide for determining strength and capacity of the Regional Coalition, detailing what will be possible when coalitions create their unique infrastructures.
- **Guiding Document(s)** – This formalization of goals and operational agreements helps maintain focus, build trust and allow members to hold each other accountable.
- **Governance Structure and Decision-Making Process** – This visual or written document explains who is accountable for what types of decisions (and at what levels), and how the coalition prioritizes decisions. It also helps members and others to know how an issue will proceed from proposal through input process to deliberation and decision.


Cost and staffing implications. Regions have built capacity over the past several years through Infant Toddler funding and Community Momentum grants for the Early Learning Regional Coalitions. In most cases, coalition members currently contribute funding or in-kind support to ensure that the region has adequate capacity to succeed. While many of the implementation steps above are not new to the Regional Coalitions, many coalitions have a need to strengthen capacity and formalize structures that they have developed. Doing so will require careful consideration of the additional amount of staffing capacity and associated costs that will be needed.

Schedule. To be able to represent regional interests effectively in the new state-local coordination structure, all regions will need to ensure that these elements are in place quickly. Coalitions will be able to implement quickly (in the “near-term”) many of the recommendations above, such as articulation of governance structures, guiding documents and decision protocols. Other recommendations (such as recruiting technical expertise and securing long-term funding) they may complete in the “mid-term.” Regional Coalitions are already in the process of implementing many of these changes, so timing does not currently depend on the timeframe for adopting the recommendations or the implementation efforts of ELAC or the Early Learning Partnership.

Implementation of Recommendation 10. Increase engagement of diverse stakeholders.

Implementation steps. While all Early Learning Regional Coalitions have had some experience with efforts to engage diverse cultural communities, community influencers and the general public, sustained effort has historically been a challenge. In many instances, Regional Coalitions have requested technical support to strengthen their cultivation skill and increase engagement support to help “graduate” supporters to deeper engagement over time. ELAC, DEL and Thrive by Five Washington can be particularly helpful in securing technical assistance and helping each region to build on capacity in other regions or at the state level (such as strengthening the engagement of state-level advocacy organization support to Regional Coalitions.)

Task 1. Articulate ways, in addition to membership, that parents, businesses, elected officials, and other interested parties can share their voice and affiliate with the coalition.

<p>Function</p> <p>2. Choose Strategies and Priorities;</p> <p>3. Ensure Funding and Policy Support;</p> <p>5. Build Public Understanding and Will</p>
<p>Related Implementation</p> 

Action Steps:

- Each Regional Coalition carefully considers the different types of involvement they need and desire in coalition business, and names specific ways for people to be involved, including:
 - Articulating different levels of consultation and engagement to ensure that regional decisions balance stakeholder interest and the need for swift decision-making (see *Types of Stakeholder Engagement* under Recommendation #1 in the Recommendations section).
 - Naming roles for “supporters” (such as parents, business leaders and elected leaders) who want to champion the coalition’s work but not be engaged in regular coalition meetings as members.
 - Naming roles for “partners” who may be part of other coalitions or collaborative efforts, and who want to advance toward common aims while maintaining their own effort.
 - Naming increased opportunity and responsibility that comes with “membership.”

Capacity Needs

Additional funding to support more of a Coordinator’s time; and other expertise and capacity also will be needed

Time Frame

Mid-Term & Long-Term

Task 2. Engage communities of color in regional initiatives.

Action Steps:

- Each Regional Coalition plans processes to connect coalition decision makers with members of communities of color.
- Each Regional Coalition intentionally reaches out and engages communities of color. To remove potential barriers, the coalition will meet in convenient community gathering places, provide interpretation services, and use varied solutions to promote access.

Task 3. Engage other communities that are far from opportunity.

Action Steps:

- Each Regional Coalition plans processes to connect coalition decision makers with those furthest from opportunity.
- Each Regional Coalition intentionally reaches out and engages members of communities furthest from opportunity. Actions might include using meeting in places convenient to them, providing interpretation services and using varied solutions to promote access.

Task 4. Engage people who make and influence decisions in the breadth of program areas that make up the region's early learning system.

Action Steps:

- Each Regional Coalition ensures that coalition membership and partnerships include a mix of cross-sector partners who understand and influence different elements of the early learning system.
- Each Regional Coalition considers and cultivates the types of community stakeholders that need to be part of coalition governance to move a regional early learning agenda, and how the stakeholders should be involved in the coalition.
- Each Regional Coalition identifies ways to build and maintain ongoing relationships with elected leaders, keeping them apprised of regional needs, priorities and policy agenda.

Task 5. Raise public awareness of and participation in regional and state initiatives (such as Infant Toddler support, Early Achievers, WaKIDS, Love.Talk.Play., etc.).

Action Step:

- Each Regional Coalition plans and implements communications and community engagement strategies that raise the profile of regional and state initiatives, and connect families and professionals to the next step in using/supporting the regional early learning system.

Supporting documents and processes

- **Membership and Engagement Framework** – This document articulates the ways that people and organizations can affiliate with the Early Learning Regional Coalition, naming opportunities for input, responsibilities and what is desired as supporters move to deeper levels of engagement (see *Types of Stakeholder Engagement* (Table 6) in the Recommendations section, for starter dough.)
- **Membership Process, Rights and Responsibilities** – This section of the Regional Coalition Charter or Bylaws articulates how people and/or organizations become members, and their rights and responsibilities.

Cost and staffing implications. Coalitions have involved stakeholders for several years. However, engaging the diverse types of stakeholders recommended will require more dedicated capacity to reach parents, cultural communities and geographically remote communities. Those processes also differ substantially from the capacity needed to cultivate and engage business, funding and policymaking stakeholders. Regional Coalitions will differ in their need for technical advice and logistical support to implement these recommendations. Some regions may be able to access these new capacities and skills through in-kind support from local funders, advocacy organizations and other partners or from state-level organizations. However, most will need additional staff time (a portion of an FTE) as “capacity,” and many will need to secure technical support to strengthen their efforts in cultivating and engaging this broader set of partners.

Schedule. Most coalitions have been implementing elements of this work for several years through their Infant Toddler and Regional Coalition work. However, engaging large numbers of parents and other community leaders takes thoughtful consideration, as well as strengthening of capacity. These recommendations assume coalitions can clarify membership and partnership options, and articulate community input mechanisms within six months (mid-term), while deep engagement and mobilization of a variety of champions will require long-term effort.

Implementation of Recommendation 11. Strengthen joint local, regional and state action.


Implementation steps. Implementing this recommendation depends on creating the processes to focus the energy and action of each Early Learning Regional Coalition. Most Regional Coalitions have elements of the implementation tasks in place, but each will need to review and refine their current process in relation to changes at the regional level and comparable processes the state level is adopting.

Function
2. Choose Strategies and Priorities;
4. Implement and Expand Services and Programs;

Task 1. Ensure a transparent, effective and aligned process for agenda setting.

Action Steps:

- Each Regional Coalition creates a predictable and easily accessible way for local and regional members and partners to raise issues, share promising practices and nominate priorities to the Regional Coalition table for consideration.
- Each coalition reviews and comments on the basic ELAC Regional Advisor Roles and Communication Protocols. Coalitions consider and add roles specific to their coalition to the ELAC Regional Advisor Position Description that will help them best leverage this role to facilitate joint action.
- Each Regional Coalition identifies and uses a process for raising issues, sharing promising practices and nominating priorities to the state level.

6. Be Accountable for Achieving Outcomes
Related Implementation 
Capacity Needs Additional funding to purchase more coordinator time and technical assistance will be needed
Time Frame Near-Term & Mid-Term

Task 2. Implement prioritized strategies through use of an *Action Plan*.

Action Steps:

- Each Regional Coalition creates a simple *Action Plan* noting: regional priorities; joint state and regional priorities; implementation strategies; connections to local and state efforts; timeline; accountable parties; and success measures.
- Each Regional Coalition uses the *Action Plan* to drive regional action to improve services for children and families and assess progress of regional coordination efforts.
- Each Regional Coalition focuses additional effort on closing the opportunity gap.

Task 3. Select and support a regional advisor to participate in the Early Learning Advisory Council (ELAC).

Action Steps:

- Public and private funding partners work with each Coalition to identify and secure technical and financial support necessary to allow coalitions to participate in ELAC and for related capacity building.
- Each Regional Coalition selects a Regional Advisor to ELAC who has a broad knowledge of the coalition’s work.

Task 4. Promote use of statewide performance goals to assess how well we are doing in coordinating action and delivering results.

Action Steps:

- Each Regional Coalition participates in the adopted statewide process for selecting, using and revising “Performance Goals and Indicators” (see Recommendation #2) to promote continuous improvement of local, regional and state early learning systems.
- Each Regional Coalition uses the “Performance Goals and Indicators” as a guide to set some regional priorities and identify potential system improvements.

Task 5. Establish/strengthen advocacy capacity.

Action Steps:

- Each Regional Coalition develops local capacity (for example, policy point people) to follow policymaking processes and mobilize local people to advocate for regional priorities.
- Each Regional Coalition develops partnerships with statewide advocacy organizations that can help to advance regional and state priorities, and bolster regional advocacy capacity.

Supporting documents and processes

- **Online Document Storage** – These free, web-based tools allow Regional Coalitions to store important guiding and working documents, and provide appropriate security-level access to members and other stakeholders in an efficient manner.
- **Action Plan** – This document should be simple enough to be easily understood by Regional Coalition members, but detailed enough to identify what is being done, by whom, over what time and for what intended result.
- **Performance Measure Setting Process** – A draft of this process, included in this report (see Implementation of Recommendation #2, above), will go to ELAC for discussion before adoption. It outlines opportunities for input into what the most beneficial “elevation” of performance measures can be, and how they can best help to foster mutually-reinforcing action.

Cost and staffing implications. Most of the implementation steps noted above are already part of current coalition capacity-building plans and of the existing Community Momentum grant budget. However, coalitions may need additional in-kind or paid support (more coordinator time) to build and sustain effective regional advocacy capacity. Individual coalitions may also need in-kind or paid advocacy technical assistance.

Schedule. Many of the implementation steps are already in place for some coalitions, while other coalitions are just developing them. Establishing agenda-setting processes, action planning and relationships with advocacy organizations are likely to be done quickly and are noted as near-term priorities. Actual development of the *Action Plan* is likely in the mid-term. Additionally, coalition participation in the “Performance Measures” process depends upon the state timeline, which will likely take up to six months to develop (mid-term).

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Table 14. Draft Implementation Budget Overview

Recommendation	Funding Needs	Staffing Needs
<i>Overarching Recommendations</i>		
1. Adopt stakeholder engagement framework	Possible additional funding for periodic facilitation and outreach activities.	Staff to develop project plan. Staff for communications strategy for each engagement effort. Possible consultant assistance for engagement.
2. Adopt performance goals and indicators	Possible additional funding to assist in preparation and adoption of performance goals at regional and state levels.	Staff or consultant to manage process of developing preliminary list, drafting recommendations and working with ELAC committee.
<i>Washington Early Learning Partnership</i>		
3. Invite DOH and DSHS to join Washington Early Learning Partnership	Continued funding for facilitation.	Continued staff participation from partnership agencies.
4. Create annual priorities and develop consultation process with ELAC	None.	Staff to draft proposed schedule and process, and manage review process.
5. Enhance communication between WELP and regional/local partners	None.	Communication staff to create template for calendar of activities, post resulting schedule online, and update quarterly.
<i>Early Learning Advisory Council</i>		
6. Strengthen ELAC's function in the early learning system	None for planning. Funding for ongoing ELAC staffing and operations.	No new staff initially. 1.5 FTE ongoing to staff ELAC.
7. Clarify how ELAC will carry out more focused functions	Transition Retreat facilitation and costs (SAC grant). Meeting costs, as for current ELAC meetings.	Staff or consultant to create and facilitate adopting guiding documents. Facilitator to plan and facilitate Transition Retreat.
8. Expand ELAC membership	Incremental cost to add additional members to ELAC. Travel and per diem costs for new members.	No additional staff needs.
<i>Early Learning Regional Coalitions</i>		
9. Strengthen Regional Coalitions	Continued, or possibly expanded, level of funding for coalition capacity; to be determined/negotiated with Regional Coalitions.	Continued, or possibly expanded, level of individual coalition staffing capacity.
10. Increase engagement of diverse stakeholders	Additional funding for more Coordinator time/capacity. Possible technical assistance about engagement of diverse stakeholders.	Additional coalition Coordinator capacity.
11. Strengthen joint local-regional-state action	Additional funding for more Coordinator time/capacity. Possible technical assistance to strengthen advocacy.	Additional coalition Coordinator capacity.

Table 15. Draft Partnership Implementation Budget

	Line Item	Budget	Comments
Regional Infrastructure			
A.	Personnel (State Partners)	\$0	
		\$0	Assumes no additional cost for participation of staff from partnership agencies.
B.	Partnership Meeting & Operation	\$20,000	
	Travel	\$0	
	Meeting Expenses	\$0	Assumes all meeting space will be donated
	Meeting facilitation/technical support	\$20,000	Currently \$20,000/year. Assumes continued current level of effort and cost.
	TOTAL	\$20,000	

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Table 16. Draft ELAC Implementation Budget

	Line Item	Budget	Comments
ELAC			
A.	Personnel	\$176,528	
	1 FTE Governance Administrator WMS 2	\$89,284	Includes salary and benefits. This position will support DEL and ELAC in planning, coordinating, and implementing ELAC Work Plan, activities, and recommendations; work in close coordination with the DEL Leadership Team; develop and maintain partnerships; facilitate stakeholder involvement; and development and review of performance goals.
	.5FTE Administrative Assistant 4	\$32,419	Includes salary and benefits. This position will provide administrative support for ELAC and the Governance Administrator.
	Supplies	\$2,400	Estimated at SAC grant level .
	Travel	\$4,500	Out -of-town meetings, such as travel to coalition meetings and stakeholder engagement. Estimated at SAC grant level.
	Telecommunication	\$948	Annual cost of GoToWebinar for up to 100 participants (includes GoToMeeting.
	Indirect	\$46,977.36	Calculated at 38.6 percent of salaries and benefits.
B.	Council Operations	\$23,523	
	Meeting Rooms	\$1,080	Average cost per meeting of \$180 per meeting X six meetings/year.
	Travel & Meals	\$22,443	Includes member/Regional Advisor travel and meals, including meeting meals for 6 meetings per year. Average cost of \$1,317/per meeting increased to include 12 additional members from across the state X 6 meetings/year. New average cost per meeting is \$3,773.
C.	Council Strengthening	\$5,000	
	Guiding Document Development	\$0	NA, will come from SAC grant.
	Stakeholder Engagement	\$5,000	Estimated for translation, interpretation, telecommunication, meeting costs and parent stipends.
	TOTAL	\$205,051	

Note: An implementation budget for supporting the **Regional Coalitions** will be developed in consultation with the partnership agencies and the regional coalitions.

Appendix A: Early Learning Advisory Council – Authorizing Legislation

RCW 43.215.090

Early learning advisory council — Statewide early learning plan.

- (1) The early learning advisory council is established to advise the department on statewide early learning issues that would build a comprehensive system of quality early learning programs and services for Washington's children and families by assessing needs and the availability of services, aligning resources, developing plans for data collection and professional development of early childhood educators, and establishing key performance measures.
- (2) The council shall work in conjunction with the department to develop a statewide early learning plan that guides the department in promoting alignment of private and public sector actions, objectives, and resources, and ensuring school readiness.
- (3) The council shall include diverse, statewide representation from public, nonprofit, and for-profit entities. Its membership shall reflect regional, racial, and cultural diversity to adequately represent the needs of all children and families in the state.
- (4) Council members shall serve two-year terms. However, to stagger the terms of the council, the initial appointments for twelve of the members shall be for one year. Once the initial one-year to two-year terms expire, all subsequent terms shall be for two years, with the terms expiring on June 30th of the applicable year. The terms shall be staggered in such a way that, where possible, the terms of members representing a specific group do not expire simultaneously.
- (5) The council shall consist of not more than twenty-three members, as follows:
 - a. The governor shall appoint at least one representative from each of the following: The department, the office of financial management, the department of social and health services, the department of health, the student achievement council, and the state board for community and technical colleges;
 - b. One representative from the office of the superintendent of public instruction, to be appointed by the superintendent of public instruction;
 - c. The governor shall appoint seven leaders in early childhood education, with at least one representative with experience or expertise in one or more of the areas such as the following: The K-12 system, family day care providers, and child care centers with four of the seven governor's appointees made as follows:
 - i. The head start state collaboration office director or the director's designee;
 - ii. A representative of a head start, early head start, migrant/seasonal head start, or tribal head start program;
 - iii. A representative of a local education agency; and
 - iv. A representative of the state agency responsible for programs under section 619 or part C of the federal individuals with disabilities education act;

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- d. Two members of the house of representatives, one from each caucus, and two members of the senate, one from each caucus, to be appointed by the speaker of the house of representatives and the president of the senate, respectively;
 - e. Two parents, one of whom serves on the department's parent advisory group, to be appointed by the governor;
 - f. One representative of the private-public partnership created in RCW [43.215.070](#), to be appointed by the partnership board;
 - g. One representative designated by sovereign tribal governments; and
 - h. One representative from the Washington federation of independent schools.
- (6) The council shall be cochaired by one representative of a state agency and one nongovernmental member, to be elected by the council for two-year terms.
- (7) The council shall appoint two members and stakeholders with expertise in early learning to sit on the technical working group created in section 2, chapter 234, Laws of 2010.
- (8) Each member of the board shall be compensated in accordance with RCW [43.03.240](#) and reimbursed for travel expenses incurred in carrying out the duties of the board in accordance with RCW [43.03.050](#) and [43.03.060](#).
- (9) The department shall provide staff support to the council.

[2012 c 229 § 589; 2011 c 177 § 2. Prior: 2010 c 234 § 3; 2010 c 12 § 1; 2007 c 394 § 3.]

Notes:

Effective date -- 2012 c 229 §§ 101, 117, 401, 402, 501 through 594, 601 through 609, 701 through 708, 801 through 821, 902, and 904: See note following RCW [28B.77.005](#).

Finding -- Purpose -- 2011 c 177: "The legislature finds that to fully comply with requirements in section 642B of the federal head start act, 42 U.S.C. Sec. 9837b, regarding state advisory council membership, Washington must amend existing law to reflect necessary changes in early learning advisory council membership in accordance with the federal requirement.

Accordingly, the purpose of this act is to specify four of the governor's appointees as permanent members on the early learning advisory council to comply with state advisory council requirements as follows: The head start state collaboration office director or a designee; a representative of a head start, early head start, migrant/seasonal head start, or tribal head start program; a representative of a local education agency; and a representative of the state agency responsible for programs under section 619 or part C of the federal individuals with disabilities education act. This act also revises the categories of groups from which the governor may appoint additional representatives as members of the council." [2011 c 177 § 1.]

Intent -- 2010 c 234: "The department of early learning, the superintendent of public instruction, and thrive by five's joint early learning recommendations to the governor, and the quality education council's January 2010 recommendations to the legislature both suggested that a voluntary program of early learning should be included within the overall program of basic education. The legislature intends to examine these recommendations and Attorney General Opinion Number 8 (2009) through the development of a working group to identify and recommend a comprehensive plan." [2010 c 234 § 1.] **Finding -- Declaration -- Captions not law -- 2007 c 394:** See notes following RCW [43.215.010](#).

Appendix B:

Excerpt from Reauthorized Head Start Act of 2007 – Establishing State Advisory Councils on Early Education and Care

The Governor of the State shall—

(i) designate or establish a council to serve as the State Advisory Council on Early Childhood Education and Care for children from birth to school entry (in this subchapter referred to as the State Advisory Council'); and

(ii) designate an individual to coordinate activities of the State Advisory Council, as described in subparagraph (D)(i).

(B) The Governor may designate an existing entity in the State to serve as the State Advisory Council, and shall appoint representatives to the State Advisory Council at the Governor's discretion. In designating an existing entity, the Governor shall take steps to ensure that its membership includes, to the extent possible, representatives consistent with subparagraph (C).

(C) Members of the State Advisory Council shall include, to the maximum extent possible--

- a representative of the State agency responsible for child care;
- a representative of the State educational agency;
- a representative of local educational agencies;
- a representative of institutions of higher education in the State;
- a representative of local providers of early childhood education and development services;
- a representative from Head Start agencies located in the State, including migrant and seasonal Head Start programs and Indian Head Start programs;
- the State Director of Head Start Collaboration;
- a representative of the State agency responsible for programs under section 619 or part C of the Individuals with Disabilities Education Act (20 U.S.C. 1419, 1431 et seq.);
- a representative of the State agency responsible for health or mental health care; and
- representatives of other entities determined to be relevant by the Governor of the State.

(D)(i) The State Advisory Council shall, in addition to any responsibilities assigned to the Council by the Governor of the State--

- conduct a periodic statewide needs assessment concerning the quality and availability of

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early childhood education and development programs and services for children from birth to school entry, including an assessment of the availability of high-quality pre-kindergarten services for low-income children in the State;

- identify opportunities for, and barriers to, collaboration and coordination among Federally-funded and State-funded child development, child care, and early childhood education programs and services, including collaboration and coordination among State agencies responsible for administering such programs;
- develop recommendations for increasing the overall participation of children in existing Federal, State, and local child care and early childhood education programs, including outreach to underrepresented and special populations;
- develop recommendations regarding the establishment of a unified data collection system for public early childhood education and development programs and services throughout the State;
- develop recommendations regarding statewide professional development and career advancement plans for early childhood educators in the State;
- assess the capacity and effectiveness of 2- and 4-year public and private institutions of higher education in the State toward supporting the development of early childhood educators, including the extent to which such institutions have in place articulation agreements, professional development and career advancement plans, and practice or internships for students to spend time in a Head Start or prekindergarten program; and
- make recommendations for improvements in State early learning standards and undertake efforts to develop high-quality comprehensive early learning standards, as appropriate.

(ii) The State Advisory Council shall hold public hearings and provide an opportunity for public comment on the activities described in clause

- The State Advisory Council shall submit a statewide strategic report addressing the activities described in clause (i) to the State Director of Head Start Collaboration and the Governor of the State.

(iii) After submission of a statewide strategic report under clause (ii), the State Advisory Council shall meet periodically to review any implementation of the recommendations in such report and any changes in State and local needs.

(2)(A) The Secretary shall use the portion reserved under section 640(a)(4)(A)(iii) to award, on a competitive basis, one-time startup grants of not less than \$500,000 to eligible States to enable such States to pay for the Federal share of developing and implementing a plan pursuant to the responsibilities included under paragraph (1)(D)(i). A State that receives funds under this paragraph shall use such funds to facilitate the development or enhancement of high-quality systems of early childhood education and care designed to improve school preparedness through one or more of the following activities—

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- (i) promoting school preparedness of children from birth through school entry, including activities to encourage families and caregivers to engage in highly interactive, developmentally and age-appropriate activities to improve children's early social, emotional, and cognitive development, support the transition of young children to school, and foster parental and family involvement in the early education of young children;
- (ii) supporting professional development, recruitment, and retention initiatives for early childhood educators;
- (iii) enhancing existing early childhood education and development programs and services (in existence on the date on which the grant involved is awarded), including quality improvement activities authorized under the Child Care and Development Block Grant Act of 1990; and
- (iv) carrying out other activities consistent with the State's plan and application, pursuant to subparagraph (B).

(B) To be eligible to receive a grant under this paragraph, a State shall prepare and submit to the Secretary a plan and application, for a 3-year period, at such time, in such manner, and containing such information as the Secretary shall require, including—

- (i) the statewide strategic report described in paragraph (1)(D)(ii), including a description of the State Advisory Council's responsibilities under paragraph (1)(D)(i);
- (ii) a description, for each fiscal year, of how the State will make effective use of funds available under this paragraph, with funds described in subparagraph (C), to create an early childhood education and care system, by developing or enhancing programs and activities consistent with the statewide strategic report described in paragraph (1)(D)(i);
- (iii) a description of the State early learning standards and the State's goals for increasing the number of children entering kindergarten ready to learn;
- (iv) information identifying the agency or joint interagency office, and individual, designated to carry out the activities under this paragraph, which may be the individual designated under paragraph (1)(A)(ii); and
- (v) a description of how the State plans to sustain activities under this paragraph beyond the grant period.

(C) The Federal share of the cost of activities proposed to be conducted under subparagraph (A) shall be 30 percent, and the State shall provide the non-Federal share.

(D) Funds made available under this paragraph shall be used to supplement, and not supplant, other Federal, State, and local funds expended to carry out activities related to early childhood education and care in the State.

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(E) Not later than 18 months after the date a State receives a grant under this paragraph, the State shall submit an interim report to the Secretary. A State that receives a grant under this paragraph shall submit a final report to the Secretary at the end of the grant period. Each report shall include—

- (i) a description of the activities and services carried out under the grant, including the outcomes of such activities and services in meeting the needs described in the periodic needs assessment and statewide strategic report;
- (ii) information about how the State used such funds to meet the goals of this subsection through activities to develop or enhance high-quality systems of early childhood education and care, increase effectiveness of delivery systems and use of funds, and enhance existing programs and services;
- (iii) information regarding the remaining needs described in the periodic statewide needs assessment and statewide strategic report that have not yet been addressed by the State; and
- (iv) any other information that the Secretary may require.

(F) Nothing in this subsection shall be construed to provide the State Advisory Council with authority to modify, supersede, or negate the requirements of this subchapter.

Appendix C:

Guiding Principles from *Washington Early Learning Plan*

1. Be child-focused and family-centered. Promote meaningful partnerships with parents and families, since they are children’s first teachers.
2. Promote alignment of early learning services and programs as a continuum that is comprehensive, supports whole child development, and is available to all children.
3. Be flexible, culturally responsive, accessible, relevant and respectful, and reflect the needs of local communities and individual children.
4. Be developmentally appropriate and, where applicable, evidence based (as available), and address each stage of child development from prenatal through third grade.
5. Build on strengths—of children, parents, families, providers, programs, communities and prior planning efforts, such as Kids Matter and Washington Learns.
6. Develop a tiered approach to addressing the early learning needs of all children in the state, identifying those strategies that apply to all, some and few children.
7. Provide supports, services and programs for at-risk children and families to close the preparation gap.
8. Promote high-quality early learning to increase school readiness and success in school and in life.
9. Include professional development and support for early learning and care providers.
10. Promote transparency and accountability in all policies, services and programs.
11. Provide ways to measure progress over time.
12. Identify funding sources and promote adequate financing of the system.
13. Provide for meaningful stakeholder review and comment on the Washington State Early Learning Plan as it is being developed and on the system’s performance over time.

Appendix D: Communications and Engagement Strategy

(4/27/12)

1. Purpose and Definitions

This document lays out a draft strategy for communications and engagement during the course of the Washington State Department of Early Learning's State-Local Coordination Project. It is intended for internal review, discussion and refinement. The document will provide the basis to craft implementation plans for the public engagement.

In the context of this project, we use the term "communications" to refer to dissemination of information to project stakeholders and the general public. We use the term "engagement" to describe activities that disseminate information out, engage stakeholders *and* seek input back to project leaders from stakeholders and the general public. The approach described in this document weaves communications and engagement activities into an integrated strategy.

2. Goals

- **Communications goal:** to share information about the project at key milestones, including information about both process (structure, decision making, comment opportunities) and substance (research learnings, data snapshot process, governance options, recommendations, decisions).
- **Engagement goal:** to engage and solicit meaningful input from a broad and representative range of stakeholders that will inform project recommendations and decisions.

3. Approach

- **Concepts.** Several concepts guide the approach: 1) target communications and engagement activities to coincide with key project milestones, 2) ensure coordinated and complementary activities, 3) be pro-active in reaching a broad range of stakeholders from within the intended audiences, 4) be intentional, inclusive and accessible in communications and engagement structures, process, tools and materials (e.g. materials will be written in plain English to be easily understandable to all).
- **Audiences.** We see the **primary audience** for communications and engagement activities to be people guiding and working within the multiple early learning systems, particularly those who both understand the early learning system and can consider implications of changes to that system: leaders, organizations, agencies, parents and providers for whom issues of state-local coordination and statewide governance are most immediately relevant. Among these, we want to hear voices that span the state, and represent diverse rural and urban areas, and ethnic and cultural communities.

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By connecting across multiple audiences, we aim to reach all key interests as described in the Washington State *Early Learning Plan*. These include:

- Prenatal care;
 - Child care and preschool;
 - Kindergarten through third grade;
 - Health and nutrition sector;
 - Social-emotional development and mental health;
 - Parent and community partnerships;
 - Parenting education and resources;
 - Higher education in child development and early childhood education; and
 - Professional development for early learning professionals.
- **Elements.** This strategy has four components of communications and engagement: 1) internal coordination, 2) round one engagement, 3) round two engagement, and 4) general communications and updates. The next page describes major tasks for each component, mapped to a timeline.

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Task	Outcome/Milestone	Deliverable	JAN	FEB	MAR	APR	MAY	JUN	JUL	AUG	SEP	OCT	NOV	DEC	JAN
INTERNAL COORDINATION															
1. Coordination with staff workgroup (and Communication staff as needed)	Coordination on all external communications	Follow up actions as needed	X	X	X	X	X	X	X	X	X	X	X	X	X
2. Create overall communications and engagement strategy	Agreement on approach and strategies	Approved strategy; Project engagement list		X	X										
ROUND ONE ENGAGEMENT															
3. Conduct public engagement and engagement	Input from stakeholders and public regarding governance opportunities, barriers, needs	Implementation plan for engagement; toolkit/materials					X	X							
4. Synthesize key themes from public comments	Inform work to develop options; stakeholder input was heard	Summary of public comments; posting on web sites						X	X						
ROUND TWO ENGAGEMENT															
5. Conduct public engagement and engagement	Input from stakeholders and public regarding governance options	Implementation plan for engagement; toolkit/materials										X	X		
6. Synthesize key themes from public comments	Inform deliberations on recommendations; stakeholder input was heard	Summary of public comments; posting on web sites											X		
GENERAL COMMUNICATIONS & UPDATES															
7. Periodic updates	Stakeholders informed about plans for the project	Communications materials			#1		#2		#3			#4		#5	#6
8. Develop plan for communication of recommendations	Coordinated engagement for communicating final recommendations	Implementation plan													X
9. Prepare briefing and communication tools	Communication of recommendations is clear, concise and useable	Materials for engagement													X

4. Description of Key Activities and Milestones

This section gives a narrative description of key activities and milestones from the previous table.

INTERNAL COORDINATION

The main task in this component is ongoing internal coordination with the staff workgroup, and Communications staff of DEL, OSPI and Thrive as needed. The first significant deliverable is a communications and engagement strategy, embodied in this document. We anticipate working with staff to finalize the strategy by the end of February. We will then develop a more detailed implementation plans for each round of engagement, which we will also work with staff to finalize. We will be in ongoing contact with staff to prepare for and implement engagement and communications activities. The specifics of this will unfold once we begin the work, but we anticipate major contact around tasks of reviewing draft communications and engagement materials, monitoring engagement periods, reviewing summaries of comments, and making course adjustments as needed.

ENGAGEMENT

- **Engagement Periods.** The project includes two rounds of public engagement. **Engagement Round 1**, proposed from May through June, will share learning from the Discovery Phase of the project, as well as a draft process for an annual data snapshot, and solicit input and reactions. We will summarize themes that emerge from the comments for Committee review, and also draft a summary for public distribution. We will also identify lessons about the engagement process to apply to round two engagement. **Engagement Round 2**, proposed from October to November, will share a draft governance structure (or options for a structure) and phase-in options. We will again capture themes and create a summary for public distribution.
- **Methods.** We propose a combination of methods that include online survey, one-on-one contact, and meetings with stakeholder groups. To reach our primary audience as described in section 3, we recommend that members of the Steering Committee and ELAC serve as ambassadors, making individual contacts and attending or organizing group meetings within their networks.
- **Materials.** The consultant team will create toolkits that include materials to support engagement. The kits will include versions tailored for oral and written comments. Specific items in the toolkit will be finalized in consultation with project leadership. Possible items are: a cover letter from the JRP, a backgrounder about the project, a comment form with structured questions, a script or notated comment form (for facilitators of group discussions), and the draft material or content to be reviewed and commented upon. In previous related projects, we have also found it useful to create email “blurb” language that ambassadors can use to forward engagement materials electronically.

GENERAL COMMUNICATIONS & UPDATES

- **Activities.** We propose two significant communications activities to keep stakeholders informed about the project's progress: 1) a series of periodic updates at project milestones, and 2) communication of final project recommendations and decisions. Each is further described below.
- **Periodic Updates.** The table on page 3, under task 7, notes points in time where we suggest distributing an update. These align with milestones either in engagement or in the research and model development process. We suggest topics for each of the first five updates as follows:
 - Update #1: Introduce project, purpose, goals, schedule, process
 - Update #2: Announce and kick-off round one engagement
 - Update #3: Summarize round one engagement, how comments were used, next steps
 - Update #4: Announce and kick-off round two engagement
 - Update #5: Summarize round two engagement, results of cultural competence review, how comments were used, next steps

We will work with Communications staff to draft content for the updates, which project partners can then disseminate in multiple formats (email newsletters from the JRP agencies, web page postings) and through existing channels and networks such as the Infant Toddler Networks, Early Learning Coalitions and Elementary School Principals Association of Washington, Child Care Resource and Referral Network and Educational Service Districts.

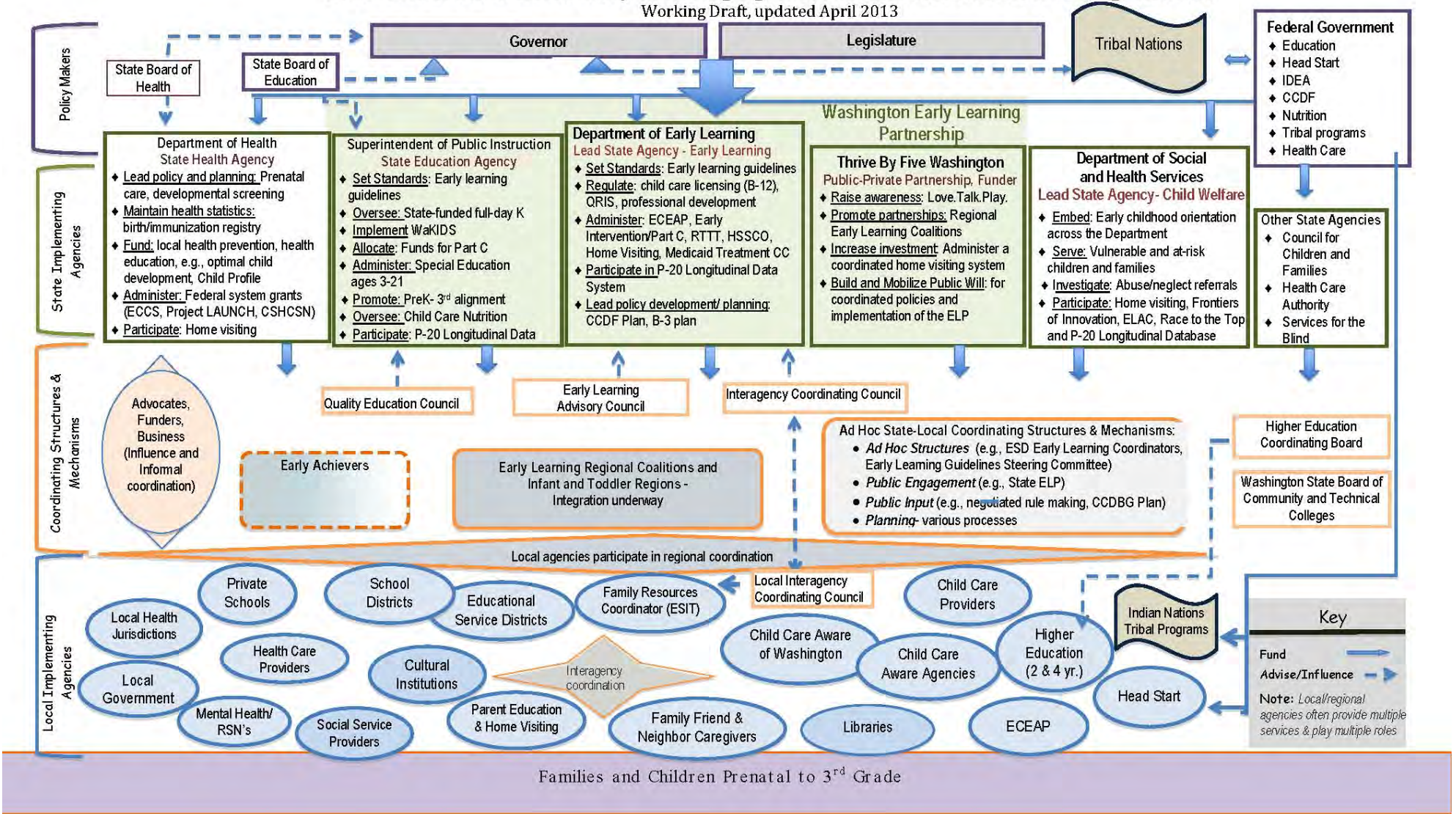
- **Communicating Final Recommendations.** The sixth and final update noted on the table in page 3 is to share final project recommendations and decisions. This would be similar in function to the previous updates; however, because this will be the final one and intended to communicate final decisions, we suggest additional planning, preparation and coordination as needed to ensure all the relevant information is shared with all relevant stakeholders.

Appendix E: Current Early Learning System Governance

See the graphic on the next page.

Overview of State-Local Early Learning Agencies & Coordination in Washington State

Working Draft, updated April 2013



Appendix F: Best Practices in State and Local Coordination – North Carolina, Arizona and Oklahoma

This summary of research about best practices and lessons learned from North Carolina, Arizona and Oklahoma is intended to inform Washington's efforts to enhance state and local coordination of prenatal to 3rd grade early learning systems. It was undertaken to inform recommendations for a structure that can help Washington realize its *Early Learning Plan* vision by enhancing coordination among state and local agencies, organizations, professions and individuals working to promote the learning and development of young children. The State and Local Coordination Project will recommend a plan to build this infrastructure, including clear and coordinated roles, responsibilities and communication in early 2013.

The objectives for this research are to:

1. Gather information and lessons learned about state and local early learning governance structures and coordination mechanisms from one to three other states
2. Gather information about what elements of coordination have resulted in improvements in child outcomes, in program effectiveness and efficiency and in maintaining and expanding state and local funds for early learning.

The states represent three very different approaches from which we can learn. Each of the three state's Early Learning Advisory Councils span early care and education, family support, and health systems. Each is mandated to focus on prenatal or birth to five years or kindergarten entry Two, North Carolina and Arizona, have state-level agencies that allocate significant funding to local communities to meet aims that span early care and education, family support and health. Both of these state-level organizations, one a non-profit and the other a public agency, have boards that are appointed and controlled by the Governor and Legislature.

North Carolina's coordinating body is housed in the Governor's Office and includes state agencies and the North Carolina Partnership for Children (Smart Start) with its connection to local non-profits partnerships and constituents. In Arizona, First Things First (a public agency but not a state agency), which has state agency leaders in ex officio board positions, serves as the coordinating body. First Things First has a system of regional councils rather than non-profits. Oklahoma's coordinating body is a school readiness board, external to the agencies, and staffed by Smart Start Oklahoma. For comparison purposes, the state population data for Washington and the best practices states is provided in the table below.

State Population Data				
	Washington	Arizona	North Carolina	Oklahoma
2010 Population (2010 census)	6,724,540	6,392,017	9,535,483	3,751,351
Children under six (2009)**	521,853	608,679	766,578	314,719
Percent young children of color	40%	61%	45%	42%
Percent with family incomes < 200% FPL	40%	54%	51%	53%
Percent families incomes < 100% FPL	18%	27%	26%	25%
** National Center for Children in Poverty, State Early Childhood Profiles (Based on 2010 Community Survey, data from 2009) Note: 2012 FPL (federal poverty level) for a family of four at 200% is \$46,100/yr.; at 100% is \$23,050/yr.				

An introductory table on the following page summaries key early learning coordination characteristics for the three best practices states. (Refer to the graphic Overview of State-Local Early Learning Agencies and Coordination in

Focus

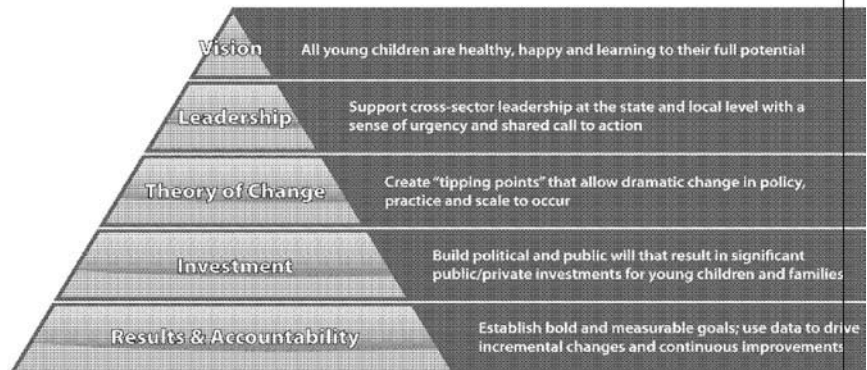
North Carolina's early learning system spans early learning, family support and health, with PreK-3rd education and alignment a more recent additional focus (starting in 2006). The state works to advance a high-quality, comprehensive, and accountable system of early learning starting with a healthy birth by:

- Creating a strong and accountable state and local infrastructure with measurable statewide goals and population-based performance outcomes that is generating results for children and local partnerships. It also helps to raise millions of dollars in local and private funds (\$17.2 in the 2009-10 fiscal year) that amplify state investments.
- Providing tools that support parents in raising healthy, happy successful children.
- Advancing child health and raising the quality of early care and education and PreK 3rd education.

Coordination and Governance

Shared decision-making, shared resources, and shared accountability for outcomes among participating organizations at the state- and local-level characterize North Carolina's governance structure. North Carolina's system building is based on a consistent framework for action and population-based performance goals. The components of North Carolina's Early Learning and Development (ELD) system include state agencies, the North Carolina Partnership for Children and its network of local partnerships. The system is coordinated through the State's Early Learning Advisory Council, which is housed in the Governor's Office.

Figure 2: North Carolina Collaborative Governance & Leadership: Framework for Action



System-Building Framework. The state consistently approaches system-building and new initiatives based on their *Collaborative Governance & Leadership Framework for Action* (graphic from the state's RTT application).

Measurable Goals, Data-Driven Decision-Making. NCPC established its Performance Based Incentive System (PBIS) with measurable, statewide goals for increasing health, well-being and development of children birth to five in 2001. Annual statewide and county data snapshots identify areas where children are doing well and those that need attention. Local partnerships then take responsibility for making decisions about how to best address areas of need. For example, a performance goal holds local partnerships accountable for ensuring that at least 75 percent of all children with special needs in every county -- who receive subsidies or other assistance-- are in high-quality 4-5 star rated programs. As a result, 94 percent of these children are now in high-quality care settings.

State-Level Implementing Agencies. The state manages its Early Learning and Development System, primarily through its Department of Health and Human Services [DHHS] (which houses the Division of Child Development and Early Education and Division of Public Health), and the Department of Public Instruction (which houses the Department of Early Learning).

The North Carolina Partnership for Children [NCPC] (also known as Smart Start), a statewide non-profit is closely connected to state government entities that govern various parts of the state's Early Learning and Development (ELD) system. NCPC leads and coordinates the 77 local non-profit Smart Start partnerships. NCPC receives substantial state funding (\$160 million in the last fiscal year), 97% of which is directed to local partnerships (amounts range from \$400,000 to \$18 million each) to improve outcomes and foster coherence across the statewide network. NCPC is required to raise an additional 10% in cash or in-kind resources, which is regularly and substantially exceeded.

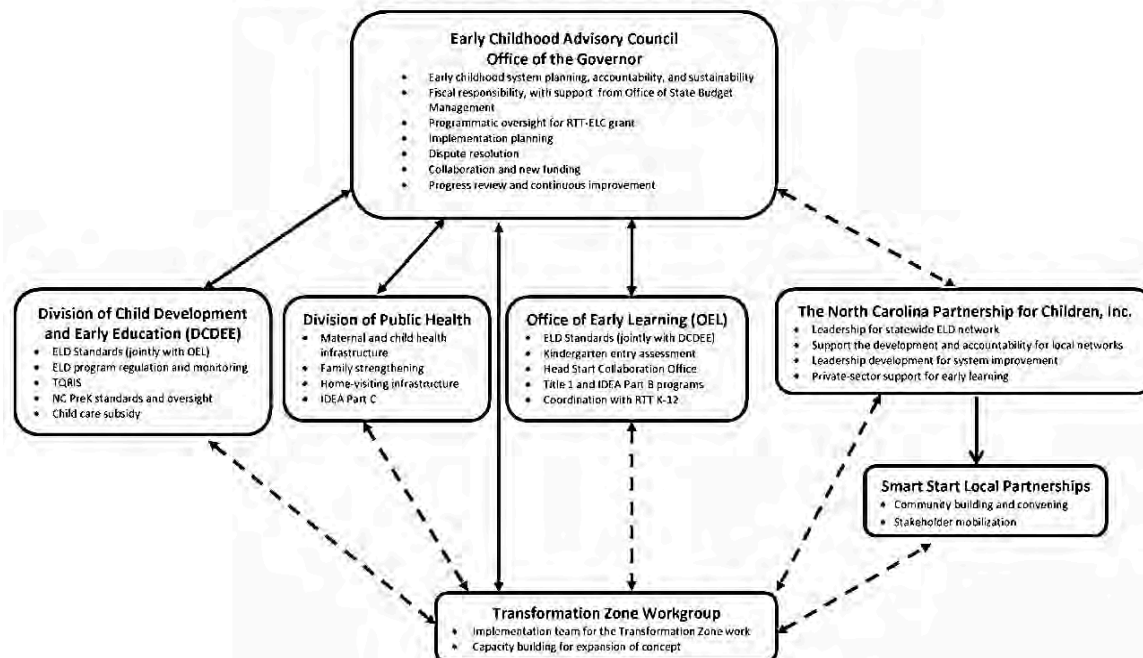
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NCPC plays several important roles: providing statewide leadership, coordination and support to the development of local infrastructure and systems; setting standards and ensuring accountability for community level outcomes; and building private sector support for early learning. NCPC's authority comes from the North Carolina General Assembly (143B-168.12(a) (7)), which has charged NCPC with ensuring that all children birth-to-five have access to high-quality early education and development services. As a condition of receiving state funds, the Partnership is required to meet conditions mandated by the statute, which encompass much of what is found in organizational by-laws. All but six of the 26 board positions are named in the legislation or appointed by public officials, (e.g., the Governor or the Minority Leader of the House of Representatives giving state officials majority control of the organization).

Community-Level Structures. A network of 77 local non-profit Smart Start partnerships covers all 100 counties. Each of these partnerships is a non-profit organization with a board of directors that mirrors NCPC and represents key government and private sector leaders, service providers, parents and others in the community. The local partnerships are community conveners that bring together and mobilize community stakeholders from early care and education, health and family support to create comprehensive supports for young children and their families and to achieve community-level outcomes. Each is held accountable for population-based performance goals (e.g., "60% of all children in every county receiving child care subsidies will be in 4-5 star settings" or "75% of subsidized children with special needs must be in 4-5 start settings".)

Coordinating Structures and Mechanisms. The state's early learning and development work is coordinated through the Early Childhood Advisory Council (ECAC), created by Governor Beverly Purdue in July 2010 to advise and make recommendations to the Governor and all state agencies about early childhood. Selection of ECAC as the lead agency for North Carolina's Race to the Top- Early Learning Grant underscores the importance of its role. North Carolina's Early Learning Advisory Council (ECAC) is housed in the Governor's Office. Members, appointed by the Governor include: agency and division heads from Department of Health and Human Services (HHS) and the Department of Public Instruction (DPI); North Carolina Partnership for Children (NCPC); local Smart Start partnerships; the University System; the Community College system; Head Start Collaboration; philanthropy; business; and the medical community. The structure and roles are shown on the following page (graphic is from Race to the Top (RTT) Early Learning Challenge application).

North Carolina Race to the Top – Early Learning Challenge Governance Organizational Chart



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Early Childhood Advisory Council Goals and Roles. The initial 2010 *ECAC Strategic Report* (slowed down, but not changed by work on the Race to the Top application) sets out five major goals for the Advisory Council:

1. Develop an integrated, comprehensive 3-year strategic plan;
2. Strengthen the quality of programs and expand opportunities for participation;
3. Strengthen the awareness and commitment among families, business and policy makers to ensure that young children are healthy, learning and thriving;
4. Strengthen coordination and collaboration;
5. Support the implementation of an integrated data system.

As identified in the *Strategic Report*, ECAC responsibilities (13 in all) include: creating a shared vision; strengthening collaboration and coordination among sectors; identifying resources; making policy and budget recommendations to the Governor; coordinating and overseeing relevant federal grants; assessing needs; and preparing a statewide strategic report addressing the activities of the Advisory Council. The ECAC will focus first on development of a 3-year strategic plan (Goal 1) and formalization of the ECAC structure and operation. More information about this should be available in the fall of 2012.

North Carolina Partnership For Children's Local Partnership Council. As stated in the NCPC authorizing legislation, a Local Partnership Advisory Council (LPAC) serves in an advisory capacity to The North Carolina Partnership for Children, Inc. (NCPC). To ensure communication between local Smart Start partnerships and NCPC, LPAC nominates local partnership representatives to serve on NCPC board committees. These local partnership representatives may be executive directors, current local board chairs or past local board chairs who have served in that capacity for at least one year. They are responsible for: representing local partnerships; ensuring that information from NCPC board committees is communicated to local partnerships, and, ensuring that other issues important to local partnerships, not only those related to NCPC board issues, get communicated to NCPC.

Today, there is cycle of state-local partnership communication and input on shared issues. It begins with issues to be considered by the NCPC board being given to Local Partnership Advisory Council members who solicit and provide feedback to the state Partnership. Local feedback is included in information provided to the State Partner's Board of Directors and committees. Summaries of board action are given to all of the Local Partnership executive directors as well as the LPAC. This feedback is brought into the North Carolina Advisory Council as well.

State and Local Communication. State and local communication occurs largely through NCPC and the local Smart Start partnerships through meetings, e-mail list serves, webinars and personal interactions. The NCPC executive spends the majority of her time working with local partnerships.

Data. North Carolina utilizes a Performance-Based Incentive System (PBIS) initiated in 2001 to measure the progress of the statewide organization and its 77 local partnerships. Goals are population-based (e.g., 75% of child with special needs receiving child care subsidies are in 4-5 star rated child care settings). Measures include: early care and education (e.g., placements, quality, teacher compensation, and staff stability); family support; and health.

The state North Carolina Partnership for Children and each local partnership prepare annual reports used as the basis for celebration, quality improvement, technical assistance and revised goal setting. (See 2010 state report at <http://www.azftf.gov/WhoWeAre/Board/Documents/Program%20Committee/Family%20Support/Family%20Support%20Feb%2017%202012%20Meeting/09%20North%20Carolina%20Partnership%20for%20Children%20Inc%20PBIS%20Final%20Results.pdf>). See a sample local partnership report at http://www.ccpfc.org/news/data-research/pbis/cumberland_fy09-10.pdf).

Local partnerships and their grantees ensure that data is entered into the state database with young children participating in Department of Public Instruction Programs (including Head Start) assigned a student identifier for

easier cross-reference. Data system improvements, (part of the State's Race to the Top grant) will augment information about programs, teachers, and children as well as integrate data across agencies and with the state longitudinal data system.

Prenatal to PreK and K-3 Integration. Joint coordination of prenatal, family support and early care and education services occurs at the state Early Learning Advisory Council and local partnerships. Since North Carolina schools are county-managed, the connection between the Early Learning and Development System and schools is dependent on the leadership and cooperation between the two systems.

The state's Ready Schools Initiative, established in 2006 with a grant from the Kellogg Foundation, used resources to leverage interest in strengthening PreK-3rd education and alignment. The North Carolina Board of Education adopted a definition of Ready Schools and identified eight pathways that lead to ready elementary schools (see: <http://www.smartstart.org/readyschools/nc-ready-schools-history-accomplishments>). The project was rolled out in 2008 with a toolkit and pilot projects. To date, the project has positively impacted the development of an estimated 18,535 children (preK-3rd) in 53 elementary schools and 20 school districts receiving technical assistance and implementation grants.

Results and Lessons Learned

Results

North Carolina's twenty years of early learning work have been the subject of more than thirty evaluations. As a state, North Carolina has been successful in improving both program quality and outcomes for children through initiatives such as TEACH, Tiered Quality Rating and Improvement System, the More By Four Preschool Program and Ready Schools Initiative. Improvements in system, child and family outcomes include:

- A strong and accountable state and local infrastructure with measurable population-based performance outcomes that is generating results for children and local partnerships, and raising millions of dollars in local and private funds (\$17.2 in the 2009-10 fiscal year) that amplify state investments.
- Providing tools that support parents in raising healthy, happy successful children. 16,178 parents and guardians have participated in early literacy programs and 80% of adults increased the time they spend on literacy activities with children.
- Advancing child health. More children receive developmental screenings- 98% of children in participating counties received recommended screenings after the launch of the Assuring Better Health and Development Campaign (ABCD) compared to 81% before the campaign.
 - Raising the quality of early care and education. 68% of all children (124,096) in early care and education attended 4- and 5- star programs, up from 10% in 2000.
- Increasing Grade Level Reading. Third-grade math and reading scale scores and achievement levels were better for poor children who attended More at Four than their peers who did not attend More at Four. These results are of key importance, given that 90% of the children who attended More at Four were poor at that time. In addition, more children are reading at grade level in 3rd grade in counties that received higher amounts of Smart Start funding when children were younger.
- Ready Schools. The PreK- 3rd grade Initiative, launched in 2006, has developed toolkits and implemented initial projects which have positively impacted the development of 20,137 children (K-3) in 12 school districts. (See toolkits, accomplishments and lessons learned at: <http://www.smartstart.org/category/readyschools/ready-schools-home>)

Lessons

The following lessons are drawn largely from the key person interview. Those interviewed were asked to reflect on what they have learned about creating a statewide early learning system, or what they might have done differently.

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1. Keep the engine safe. Use the time when there is a supportive gubernatorial administration to enact policies that make it as hard as possible to dismantle the driving force. NCPC and Smart Start were established by a supportive Governor, as a governor-centric model, where the Governor appoints the majority of the NCPC board positions. This makes it easier for an unsupportive Governor to dismantle it. In retrospect, as North Carolina moves toward another gubernatorial election, it might have been wiser to change policies so that more board members were appointed by the board rather than by the Governor.
2. Establish a continuous, organized and phased process of quality improvement with strong stakeholder engagement at the center. Start by: setting ambitious and achievable goals; providing supports and incentives to help programs meet the goals; working to achieve a tipping point; establishing higher standards and policy; achieving penetration (scale) of increased policies and standards; and subsequently setting higher goals. This approach focuses attention on the goals, and promotes the sense of accomplishment and efficacy necessary to advocate for and reach the next level. It also provides an objective basis for providing technical assistance and taking next steps if goals are not met.
3. Local partnerships are fundamental to building systems and building public will. Local partnerships have been vital to Smart Start's results and ability to weather changes in administration. Community governance structures engage and educate diverse and powerful constituencies, generate support for needed policy and resources and tell the story to local communities. They are close to the ground, know what needs to be done in their community and have the relationships necessary to cultivate improvements in practice.
4. State-local communication and feedback loops are vitally important. Communication and feedback loops help to: keep the people across the network informed and engaged; surface challenges and opportunities that boost results; and create a sense of identify in the larger effort. This is key to long-term sustainability and to building a connected state-local early learning system that gets results for kids.
5. Ensure that local partnerships see that they are part of a bigger statewide effort. North Carolina's local partnerships are independent non-profit organizations. However, the Smart Start network delivers the most powerful results for children when local partnerships view themselves both as "locally-owned" and as part of a larger statewide strategic effort. Since this can be difficult, consider creating incentives and communication loops that support this "both/and" perspective right from the beginning. An example would be to have state system partners participate in the hiring and evaluation of local coordinators and executive directors.
6. Success of the statewide effort is dependent on capable local leaders. Not surprisingly, with 77 partnerships, Smart Start has found that when local partnership executive directors are not sufficiently skilled, relationships with community and results suffer. Having the local partnerships guided by local boards of directors is important, but it would be worth exploring having a state system partner involved in the hiring and evaluation of local coordinators.

Arizona

Arizona's current early childhood system is much younger than North Carolina's, having only five years on the ground compared to North Carolina's twenty years of experience. In that time it has built partnerships, structures, a culture and systems to make initial investments. It has also undergone the uncertainty and challenge that comes from a statewide election challenging its dedicated revenue stream. That measure was defeated.

First Things First, established by a vote of the people with a dedicated tobacco products revenue source, is the state's best-known initiative and leads the state's early learning system. First Things First was established during the tenure of Governor Napolitano who preceded current Governor Jan Brewer.

History and Context

The early foundations for Arizona's early childhood initiative began in 2001 when a community committee came together to develop a plan for a coordinated public-private support system. The following year the Governor created the State Board on School Readiness (by executive order) which created a five-year action plan for a well-funded collaborative system.

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Arizona's current statewide early childhood structure began with the 2006 passage of Proposition 203, (a tobacco products citizen's initiative) which created the Early Childhood Development and Health Board, now known as First Things First. Statutory declarations indicate that First Things First was established to provide "necessary coordination and funding for early childhood development and health in Arizona".

First Things First is a public agency with an executive director who is appointed by a board of directors. Board members are appointed by the Governor and confirmed by the Legislature (see *Arizona Revised Statutes - Title 8 Children - Sections 81151- to- 81181 Early childhood development and health fund*). The passage of this proposition marked the beginning of a voter-protected dedicated revenue stream for early childhood and a statewide governance structure with diverse representation and 31 Regional Partnership Councils. Like North Carolina, the authorizing statute specifies purpose, board membership, structure (including regional councils) and much of the guidance found in organizational by-laws. In 2010 Arizona voters re-affirmed their commitment (69% in support) to high-quality early childhood development and health when those funds were at risk.

Description

First Things First leads Arizona's early learning system building and is the part of their system from which we can learn the most about state and local coordination, so it is the primary focus of this research.

First Things First is a statewide, public agency with statutory requirement to "provide dedicated funding to improve the quality, accessibility and affordability of early childhood development opportunities in the setting of the parents' choice" (*Arizona Revised Statutes, Title 8, Section 81151, Chapter 13*). Today, \$130 million per year is generated by the tobacco products tax. By statute 90% of funds are dedicated to local communities. A significant portion of the funds is allocated based on a formula of population and poverty. The remaining amount is allocated at the Board's discretion. First Things First establishes Memoranda of Agreement with state agencies for specific areas of work. For example, First Things First is providing funds to the Department of Health Services for child care subsidies.

First Things First is a statewide organization with a network of 31 Regional Partnership Councils with volunteer members. First Things First values cultural competency and enjoys strong relationships with Arizona's Tribal nations. Each Tribal nation was offered the choice of joining a regional council or forming its own. Ten Nations now have their own council. Others are part of geographically-based regional councils. The regional councils (also specified in statute) are responsible for regional planning, assessment of regional needs and assets, developing and allocating funds that support regional strategies to address identified needs and overseeing regional plan implementation. Regional partnership boundaries were established to maximize coordination with other governmental units. Each is charged with leading local system-building efforts, conducting needs assessments, prioritizing needs and recommending funding plans. Then First Things First confirms the funding plan, issues competitive RFP's, funds and monitors contracts. They also provide intensive staffing and policy support for the Regional Partnership Councils.

First Things First characterizes its state and local organizational governance as bringing together the best of both top-down and grassroots styles with a broad unifying vision and a street-level sense of practicality. In developing their shared state and local governance structure, Arizona looked closely at North Carolina and made the decision to establish a single organization with regional councils, rather than a network of independent local non-profits like North Carolina. Both options have inherent strengths and challenges. There are some tensions between First Things First and some regional councils concerning independence and decision-making. On the other hand, there is strength in the consistent vision and strategic plan and economies of scale realized by a central policy approach and centralized data communications and financial systems.

As a relatively new governance structure and agency, First Things First recently created a number of processes and documents that describe its agreements about structure, roles, policy and the best practices in which it invests. Two documents that may be particularly helpful to our consideration of coordinating structures, values and roles are the:

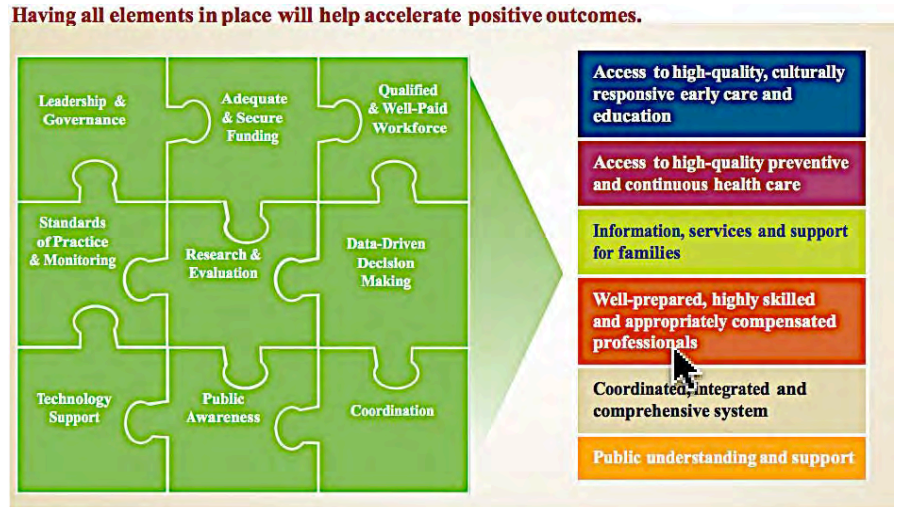
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- Responsible Governance Statement, which states the organization's values, the components of the governance system, along with the roles and responsibilities of the board and executive. (See: <http://www.azfff.gov/WhoWeAre/Board/Documents/Policy%20and%20Procedures/2-101%20Responsible%20Governance%20Statement.pdf>)
- Principles of Engagement for FTF Board, Staff, Council Members and volunteers, a signed statement of commitment to a standard of excellence, in our own behavior founded in trust, respect, integrity, teamwork, camaraderie, loyalty, interdependence and mutuality (See: <http://www.azfff.gov/WhoWeAre/Board/Documents/Policy%20and%20Procedures/2-103%20Principles%20of%20Engagement%20Statement.pdf>)

Focus

Arizona's early learning system focuses on children from birth to five years and their families. Their work spans family support, health, early care and education and health. Through its staff and Board, its 31 regional councils, its partnerships and grantees First Things First works to:

- Create a strong and accountable state and local infrastructure with a culture of strong internal and external cooperation and culturally-responsive investments guided by local communities;
- Support parents in raising healthy children who are prepared for success in school and in life;
- Advance child health (implementation to date is limited);
- Raise the quality of and access to high quality early learning programs.



System Building Framework and Goals

Arizona utilizes the strategy framework noted in the figure to the right, recognizing that all the pieces must be in place to achieve their goals (right hand column.) The *First Things First Strategic Plan Road Map* includes nine elements: leadership and governance; adequate funding; a qualified and well-paid workforce; standards of practice and monitoring; research and evaluation; data-driven decision-making; technology and support; public awareness; and coordination.

Coordination and Governance

State implementing agencies include First Things First and three state agencies. The First Things First Board of Directors is designated as Arizona's Early Childhood Council (and as the lead agency for its Race to the Top Early Learning Challenge).

State Implementing Agencies. Coordination among implementing agencies is advanced by the statutory requirement that directors of the three state agencies that manage other key early learning functions agencies have ex officio seats on the First Things First Board of Directors. The state-level implementing agencies are:

- First Things First;
- The Arizona Department of Education, which has oversight of state- and federally-funded school-based programs within districts and charters. It manages the Head Start State Collaboration Office to establish

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linkages among Head Start, child care, social welfare, health and state funded preschool programs, and K-12 Education;

- The Department of Health Services which regulates child care and private preschools; and
- The Department of Economic Services, which manages child care subsidies and TANF.

Planning processes. Stakeholder involvement in planning is central to First Things First values and practice. Stakeholders are involved in board committees and advisory sub-committees focusing on issues such as Cultural Responsivity, developmental screening and early learning and family support Indicators. Committees include regional partnership representatives, state agency representatives, advocates, philanthropists, experts in the field (including some national advisors), and board members.

Values and Decision-Making. The *First Things First Strategic Road Map* includes a statement of values about how decisions are made:

- By involving public and private partners and communities;
- By focusing on desired outcomes for all children;
- By emphasizing local planning and implementation;
- By utilizing ongoing and rigorous analyses of qualitative and quantitative data, proven best practices and system and program outcomes.

State-Local Structure. First Things First invests heavily in its staffing policy and communications infrastructure tools for the regional councils and provides intensive policy and communications staff support to the volunteer regional councils.

First Things First Strategy Toolkit. First Things First has a menu of evidence based practices that Regional Councils can select from in developing their early childhood system and funding recommendations. Each strategy contains a standard set of information including: descriptions, standards of practice; and unit cost. (See Toolkit at: <http://www.azfff.gov/pages/webmain.aspx?PageID=2D427ADB35B34BB09F353B77B74AB9BA>). This toolkit includes information regarding more than 70 strategies. Of particular interest to our Washington effort is the *Coordination Standard of Practice- Community Partnerships* (<http://www.azfff.gov/pages/WebMain.aspx?PageId=9E8669C97C0C408B9F3567C855744398&StrategyId=97.>)

Community Level Structures. The state has 31 regional councils with 350 volunteer members leading early childhood initiatives in their communities. Members are appointed by the First Things First Board and include: parents; representatives of Arizona's federally-recognized tribes; child care and preschool providers; health professionals; and members of faith, business and philanthropic communities. Councils and their members: collect information regarding the strengths and desires of their community; prioritize specific needs; plan how to address those needs; choose collaborators; and identify funding necessary to carry out their plan. Needs assessments and funding plans are posted on the website at: <http://www.azfff.gov>.

Tribes have significant autonomy and are given options about whether they choose to participate as separate councils or as part of the regional councils. 19 of the state's 22 tribes participate. Ten have elected to form a separate regional partnership council. Nine participate through their regional councils.

State and Local Communication. Communicating and building public awareness are core functions, considered central to sustainability and to improving child outcomes (referenced in statute and in the *Strategic Road Map*.) First Things First mirrors the private sector in combining communications, branding, community outreach and mobilization and Tribal Affairs in a single External Affairs section. They note that the intensive focus on these combined functions contributed mightily to building sufficient public will to stave off a 2010 challenge to the dedicated early learning revenue source.

First Things First invests in public awareness campaigns (and campaign evaluation), designed to improve parent knowledge and inform behavior, and in earned media. The agency and its work are typically cited in 3-6

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print/broadcast news articles per week in papers across the state and First Things First sends weekly clippings to all council and board members. Regular communication between First Things First Regional Council staff and Council members, planning processes, newsletters and e-mail updates keep state and local staff, volunteers and Board members informed. All needs assessments, funding plans and annual reports and meeting agendas and summaries are publicized online.

Data Systems. The state has separate data systems for early learning and K-12, but First Things First monitors the impact of its birth to five services in three tiers:

1. Grantee accountability;
2. Programmatic accountability (e.g., did the Arizona Parent Kit impact parental knowledge and behavior?); and,
3. Statewide accountability (statewide studies to determine whether services result in children arriving at school healthier and ready to succeed.) Longitudinal analyses include: a large scale longitudinal study of the impact of quality early childhood experiences; geographic analyses of programs and services; and measurement of children's progress over time compared to children who were not able to access the same services.

A committee of national research advisors (see <http://www2.ed.gov/programs/racetothetop-earlylearningchallenge/applications/arizona-appendix.pdf>, Page 528) recently advised First Things First to invest in implementation and reflective practice (continuous quality improvement), rather than its current longitudinal studies. The Committee report will be presented to the First Things First Board in June, at which time it will become publicly available.

Prenatal to PreK and K-3 Integration. This is an area of ongoing effort and there are no major lessons that are not noted elsewhere. This does underscore the point that connections made in one area create disconnects in others. First Things First is mandated to focus on children birth to five, which does not promote a P-3rd approach.

Results and Lessons Learned

Results

First Things First, now in its 6th year, has broad system results and early childhood outcome results. System results include: a substantial dedicated revenue stream; a citizen's movement; and a strong state and local governance structure that is attending to the well-being and progress of young children.

Child and family results (from the annual report) include:

- 7,709 families enjoy stronger, more supportive parent-child relationships because of home visiting;
- Approximately 36,000 children in 711 center- and home-based settings have access to high quality child care (QRIS);
- 11,433 fluoride varnishes were applied.

Lessons

The following lessons are drawn largely from the key person interview. Those interviewed were asked to reflect on what they have learned about creating a statewide early learning system, or what they might have done differently.

1. Governance is key to sustainability and system integration. System integration is tough work and can take years. Institutionalizing governance structures in statute with mandated purposes, participation and authorities fosters durable systems that are less dependent on individual leaders and overcomes resistance to change. Arizona made progress with its early informal structures, but it was uneven. At some point you need more horsepower to take it to the next level.
2. Having someone who stays awake at night thinking about the big picture and "place" to have the conversation boosts the ability to improve systems and outcomes. Kids need it all, not just family support or health or education. In Arizona, the First Things First Board, staff and volunteers (in 31 regional councils) focus on how each part of the system improves child outcomes rather than at the quality and results of individual services or agencies.

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However, no matter what you put “under one roof”, coordination with others will still be needed. Arizona addresses this at the state level through First Things First’s broad mandate to improve school readiness (instead of individual programs) and by including the directors of the Department of Economic Security, Department of Health Services and the Superintendent of Public Instruction as non-voting *ex officio* members of the FTF Board of Directors (9 members, appointed by the governor and confirmed by the legislature). The Board is a place to have the state-level conversation. This common direction flows through to the First Things First regional councils and their system building and services. Not to say there are not tensions, because there will be tensions in any choice made. However, looking at the options, this is a good choice for Arizona.

3. It is important to create a culture and develop the relationships necessary for system leaders and partners to hash out disagreements, so that families get the best possible quality of service. Though it can be tough, disagreements about policy, turf, or resources, need to be settled so that families do not pay the price. Someone needs to be on the lookout for big issues and prepare to call the question and take the first step.
4. Co-creation and co-funding at the state level makes it easier for local communities. The more that state agencies and players can integrate policy, funding, reporting and data, the easier and more efficient it is for local communities and agencies. In one example of this, the Arizona Department of Health Services and First Things First have issued joint RFP’s for funding from both agencies. In doing so, they streamlined purposes, requirements and reporting.
5. Systematic regional planning and funding cultivates allegiance to the statewide goals, values and culture of reflective practice. To state the obvious, funding stimulates participation. It can be used to develop consistent platforms for planning, practice, accountability and system building.
6. Deep and broad stakeholder engagement is critical for making sound strategic decisions and building public will. Arizona credits their stakeholder involvement in all aspects of planning -- from policy and public awareness campaigns to statewide indicators --to regional council recommendations of funding plans -- with identifying the right things to do and building the public will to defeat the 2010 challenge to their dedicated revenue stream.
7. Nurturing and communicating values and “brand promise” pays big dividends. First Things First “promised” that they would be accountable for: improving school readiness; focusing on what works; and moving away from “business as usual”. They bring their values and brand promise into everyday practice and focus intensely on communications and community outreach. This has played a big role in their significant systems development and reach in a relatively short time and factors largely in the public support for early learning.
8. Investments in staffing, policy, tools, and data infrastructure strengthen consistency and quality of regional council recommendations, programs and information needed for accountability and program improvement. Arizona has invested heavily in statewide infrastructure. They provide staff for each Regional Council, a menu and toolkit of evidence-based programs and a central data system. The *Resources Strategy Toolkit* includes the set of evidence-based practices from which regional councils can select when making their funding recommendations. For an example *Standard of Practice for Community Partnerships* see: <http://www.azfff.gov/pages/WebMain.aspx?PagelId=9E8669C97C0C408B9F3567C855744398&StrategyId=97Se>. For Child Care Health Consultation see: <http://www.azfff.gov/pages/WebMain.aspx?PagelId=9E8669C97C0C408B9F3567C855744398&StrategyId=84>.

Oklahoma

History and Context

The roots of Oklahoma’s current coordination structure were established in 2003 with legislation that created the Oklahoma Partnership for School Readiness and its supporting foundation, the Oklahoma Partnership for School Readiness Foundation. The partnership board then named the school readiness effort *Smart Start Oklahoma* and encouraged continued investments in Oklahoma’s youngest children and their families.

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Oklahoma invests in early childhood. The state is known for providing universal voluntary preschool for all four-year-olds. It has the nation's oldest QRIS and the best child care regulatory framework according to National Association of Child Care Resource and Referral Agencies (*We Can Do Better*, 2011).

Oklahoma is also becoming known for its Oklahoma Champions for Early Childhood (OK-CEO), a growing network of business professionals formed in 2010 to help create awareness of the importance of establishing quality early childhood programs. There have been three governors since its universal Pre-k program and QRIS were put into place in 1998 by Governor Francis Keating (R) who was succeeded by Governor Brad Henry (D) and current Governor Mary Fallin (R).

Description

Oklahoma's nationally-recognized preschool, QRIS and licensing programs are managed by state agencies. State and local coordination efforts, the subject of this brief, are carried out by:

- Oklahoma Partnership for School Readiness (OPSR) a public private partnership board which serves as the State Early Childhood Advisory Council; and
- Smart Start, Oklahoma, the state's early childhood initiative that provides staff support to the Oklahoma Partnership for School Readiness and coordinates a network of local Smart Start partnerships. (Smart Start was established as the OPSR foundation.)

OPSR serves as a "neutral" place where agencies, business and stakeholders can have cross-cutting conversations about the school readiness of young children, percentages of children reading at or above grade level by 3rd grade and the status of programs and supports that contribute to children's success. By law (HB 1904) OPSR is responsible for: conducting a needs assessment; implementing a public engagement campaign; providing leadership to encourage communities to develop and improve school readiness opportunities; encouraging coordination of services; maximizing private sector funding; submitting an annual report with specified information. Its accountabilities are limited to conducting the needs assessment and submitting an annual report. Upon being designated as the state's Early Learning Advisory Council, OPSR took on the additional responsibilities required by federal legislation (e.g., statewide needs assessment, identification of opportunities and barriers, establishment of unified data collection system). OPSR is staffed by Smart Start Oklahoma.

The 32 member Board includes: state agencies serving young children and families; the Head Start State Collaboration Director; a Head Start Agency; the cabinet secretary for education; and representatives of higher education; tribal governments; migrant programs; parents, business community and philanthropy as well as statewide organization representatives; community volunteers, health care providers; and the Oklahoma Educational Television Authority.

Smart Start Oklahoma serves both as staff to OPSR and lead in developing and coordinating a network of local Smart Start Communities. Smart Start is supported through state, federal and private funds. As the name suggests, Smart Start was modeled after the North Carolina Smart Start Initiative, without the large infusion of state funding. At both the state- and local-level, Smart Start convenes early childhood stakeholders, to coordinate and collaborate in designing services for young children and families. It has a presence in eighteen local communities (covering 55 of 77 counties).

Smart Start jointly sponsors a growing network of business professionals, known as Oklahoma Champions for Early Childhood (O-CEO). O-CEO was formed in 2010 to help create awareness of the importance of continued investment in Oklahoma's youngest children and their families and is jointly sponsored by the Potts Family Foundation, the Oklahoma Business Roundtable and Smart Start Oklahoma.

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The state Smart Start Partnership's annual budget is in the range \$1.6 million per year. (Local partnerships raise an additional \$2.5 million per year in cash support and matching funds for their work.) The University of Central Oklahoma serves as fiscal and human resources agent for the state-level Smart Start.

Focus

OPSR focuses on kindergarten readiness. The Smart Start partnerships work encompasses child care, literacy, family support, children's health and mental health and public engagement focused largely on young children birth to five and their families.

Coordination and Governance

OPSR's mission is to lead Oklahoma in coordinating an early childhood system focused on strengthening families and school readiness for all children. It is charged by state and federal statute with making recommendations to the Governor. The influence of the recommendations varies depending on the Governor. (OPSR does not have decision authority.)

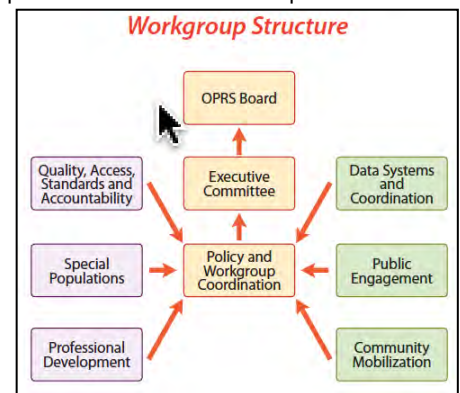
In 2010, OPSR was named as Oklahoma's State Early Childhood Advisory Council (HB 3126) and expanded its duties in accordance with federal legislation. Membership is mandated by state statute (updated in 2010) and includes workgroups through which it obtains broad input from stakeholders such as: parents; business leader; philanthropists; policy makers; state agency staff; and K-12 and higher education professionals.

OPSR oversees about \$2 million in state funds through the Oklahoma Department of Human Services budget for community mobilization and state-level coordination projects. State agencies (Department of Health and Department of Human Services) provide in-kind technical assistance to the Board.

OklahomaOPSR/ State Advisory Council Workgroups

The Advisory Council Workgroups are listed below. The work group structure is shown in the accompanying chart.

1. Professional Development and Workforce Group- recommendations for state-wide early childhood professional development including 2- and 4- year institution efficacy and capacity;
2. Quality Access, Standards and Accountability- recommendations for improving quality, access and early learning standards for early childhood programs and services;
3. Data Systems and Coordination- recommendations for unified data systems and opportunities, as well as identifying barriers to collaboration and community coordination;
4. Special Populations- recommendations regarding inclusion of underserved groups in early childhood services and programs;
5. Policy Work Group Coordination- Monitoring to ensure that all other workgroups accomplish tasks set by OPSR Board, review of workgroup recommendations, oversight of revision of the state plan and assistance to the executive committee in identifying cross cutting issues;
6. Community Mobilization- review of annual work plans and recommendations from communities and their local councils (In addition to the workgroup, a Community Mobilization Committee meets quarterly);
7. Public Engagement –Work with OPSR Foundation to develop and implement public engagement plan;
8. Finance Committee - (to be determined).



In addition to standing committees, ad hoc committees are established as needed. Workgroups are chaired by a board member or member designee and include experts in the subject area and at least two local community representatives.

There is no formal connection between local communities and OPSR. Smart Start provides travel expenses for local Smart Start Community representatives to attend each OPSR meeting and workgroup meeting.

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Decision-Making. Many decisions are reached through joint agreement. However, final decisions are made by implementing agencies and the Governor, informed by recommendations and input development through the Smart Start Workgroups. OPSR and Smart Start influence in decisions varies depending on the Governor and agency directors.

System Goals. Oklahoma's goal is that all children will be healthy, eager to learn, and ready to succeed by the time they enter school. There are four primary objectives for the next three years of the council's work:

- Develop recommendations for a school readiness definition and pilot a school readiness assessment;
- Conduct a statewide needs assessment concerning the quality and availability of early childhood education and development programs, prioritizing infant and toddler programs. Findings from the needs assessment will inform recommendations to increase the overall participation of children in the early childhood programs, including outreach to special populations;
- Develop recommendations for a cross-sector professional development system. This will include assessing the capacity and effectiveness of two- and four-year institutions of higher education to prepare the early childhood workforce;
- Develop recommendations for a statewide, coordinated longitudinal data system. Tasks will include signing a memorandum of understanding with an interagency team of data experts and charging a workgroup with developing recommendations.

State Implementing Agencies. Three state agencies implement much of Oklahoma's early childhood programs. Each agency director is a member of OPSR.

- The Oklahoma Department of Education is responsible for preschool, K-12, Part C and special education;
- The Oklahoma Department of Human Services is responsible for child care licensing, child care subsidies, Reaching for the Stars (QRIS);
- The Oklahoma Department of Health oversees public health and provides technical assistance to OPSR on home visiting, obesity prevention, tobacco use prevention and developmental screening (in partnership with Oklahoma Department of mental Health and Substance Abuse).

Community Level Structures. 18 Smart Start Communities represent Smart Start locally. Each partnership selects a fiscal agent. Smart Start Oklahoma facilitates some local planning and communication. Review of materials shows that much of the case for action and investment is based on need rather than on collective goals or performance targets. Smart Start feels that it does not yet have outcomes that it can point to, but that it is on the verge of producing improvements in outcomes.

The 2012 RFP to Local Smart Start Communities requires that communities retain a coordinator develop a governance structure and a strategic plan and produce an annual plan (all within Smart Start and State SAC Grant purposes) and will allow a maximum award of up to \$125, 000 per Community. Local Smart Start communities focus on five areas: business engagement, early care and education, family support, health and mental health and public awareness. Each determines its activities within the following specific roles:

- Promote and communicate research-based best practices in early childhood programs;
- Coordinate existing community programs to increase effectiveness and efficiency;
- Build new partnerships within communities that include a broad range of public and private stakeholders in early childhood (including parents);
- Educate local governmental and business leaders about the importance of investing in early childhood;
- Ensure that local community needs are an integral component of state level planning and coordination efforts;
- Implement public engagement campaigns.

Data Systems. Data systems are managed across several state agencies, each having separate data systems (developed and managed separately). The individual agencies can track services for individual children and have some capacity to track provider training and credentials, but the State lacks the infrastructure to connect data across agencies. The ability to connect children with needed services was identified as a top next priority for Oklahoma data systems (OPSR 2010 Data Roundtable).

Prenatal to PreK and K-3 Integration. The majority of Oklahoma's coordinating efforts are focused on children under six and their families.

Results and Lessons Learned

Results

- Some individual Oklahoma programs have impressive program and child outcome results. For example: Oklahoma's universal voluntary preschool program for four year olds reaches 71% of four year olds in the state. Another independent evaluation showed 28% more growth in vocabulary over the year due to the program, and 44% more growth in early math skills (Lamy, Barnett Kwanghee. NIEER. 2005). However, this is not related to governance and coordination efforts.
- Business leaders and the Oklahoma Business Roundtable are engaged in supporting early childhood through the Oklahoma Champions for Early Childhood (38 champions);
- Coalitions in 55 of the state's 77 counties are engaged in building early childhood systems, and increasing public awareness and investment.
- Promising work is underway. Each coalition will prepare an annual report in 2013.

Lessons Learned

The following lessons are drawn largely from the key person interview. Those interviewed were asked to reflect on what they have learned about creating a statewide early learning system, or what they might have done differently.

- Business champions help build public support during tight times. Oklahoma credits business leader champions through OK-CEO with maintain focus and minimizing reduction of early learning funding through the state's budget crisis and conservative administration.
- Oklahoma's coordination structure, with OPSR workgroups provides systematic opportunity for stakeholder input. Each workgroup includes stakeholders in addition to OPSR members. Each has a workplan and the structure for coordination of efforts, with each workgroup forwarding recommendations to the Policy and Coordination workgroup and this is working well.
- There are strong building blocks but less connection and synergy between programs than in North Carolina and Arizona. Oklahoma invests in high quality programs. Its work on how the programs work together to boost child and family outcomes, and its community partnerships are in the early stages. There are no outcomes yet. Modest investments and incentives to create coordinated systems of care are thought to be contributing factors.

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4. Partnership for Children Website (<http://www.smartstart.org/>)
5. North Carolina Early Childhood Advisory Council Strategic Report (http://www.governor.state.nc.us/library/pdf/NC_ECAC_StrategicReport2010.pdf)

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 - a. First Things First state Statute 8-1151. Attachment J.
 - b. First Things First Governance System. Attachment R
4. First Things First 2011 Annual Report (http://www.azftf.gov/WhoWeAre/Board/Documents/FTF_Annual_Report_2011.pdf)
5. State Advisory Council Grant Application, Early Childhood Development and Health Board Strategic Road Map. Attachment FF

Oklahoma

1. Interview with Debra Anderson, Executive Director Smart Start Oklahoma, March 21, 2012
2. Race to the Top – Early learning Challenge Grant Application (<http://www2.ed.gov/programs/racetothetop-earlylearningchallenge/applications/oklahoma.pdf>) and appendices
3. Oklahoma School Readiness Partnership Web Site and Annual Report (<http://www.smartstartok.org/opsr>)
4. HB 1904 Act creating the Oklahoma School Readiness Partnership (<http://www.smartstartok.org/sites/default/files/imce/Signed%20HB1094.pdf>)
5. Oklahoma Partnership for School Readiness/Smart Start Oklahoma, Local Project Funding Announcement March 19, 2012

Appendix G: Stakeholder Interview Questions and Summary of Interviews

Interview Questions for Programs, Agencies and Funders

- #1. What state and/or local early learning coordination and planning efforts are you aware of? Which do you think is/are effective and why? (*Examples: state and local interagency coordinating committees, Infant and Toddler Initiative planning, local early learning coalitions, the Early Learning Guidelines Workgroups, etc.*)
- #2: What's working well now for coordinating parenting and early learning services? What's missing or not working?
- #3: What are your ideas to improve state and local coordination of early learning services to help you provide better services to children and families? Please be specific. Who do you see leading those actions?
- #4: How easy or difficult is it for the families you work with (or that your program serves) to connect with your program and with the array of other early learning services they need to support their child's learning and development? (*Examples of services include health care, developmental screening, child care, after-school programs, mental health services*) Please give specific examples of what makes it easy or difficult.
- #5: **(for state-level interviewees)** In your view, are local policies and actions advancing the Early Learning Plan goals to the fullest extent possible? Please give specific examples. Or: Do you know of local efforts that are advancing strategies and goals in your area of work? Please give examples.
- #5: **(for local-level interviewees)** Are state policies aligned and relevant to the needs and issues in your community? Please give specific examples. (*Examples include eligibility rules, program standards, professional qualifications, etc.*)
- #6: **(for state-level interviewees)** Do you feel that you have an opportunity to voice your views on local policy and action? If so, how do you do this? If not, do you have ideas about good ways to do this?
- #6: **(for local-level interviewees)** Do you feel that you have an opportunity to voice your views on state-level policy and action? If so, how do you do this?
- #7: What data and data sources do you use (e.g., in-house data, data systems, 3rd grade reading or math scores) or would you like to have to help you identify needs, target your programs, and show the results of your early learning work? Overall, what will tell that things have improved?

Focus Group Questions for Parents and Early Learning Professionals

Date, Time and Place: _____

We appreciate having the chance to spend some time with you to talk about how local and state programs and organizations can work together to improve services to children and families. We will be discussing the following questions during our time with you:

1. *What kinds of **programs or services have you or the families you work with used to support your/their child's development and learning** and for help as parents? Are there other services and supports **you/they wanted but could not find** in your community?*
2. *As you or the families you work with try to **find and use information and services, what has worked well and what could make it easier?** Please give specific examples of what makes it easy or difficult.*
3. *Thinking about the programs and services you have used as a parent or early learning professional, are there **differences in how these programs work that make it easier or harder for you to use them?** What are some examples?*
4. *How do you think **parents should be involved** in working with early learning organizations to improve services for children and families?*
5. *Our last question for you is about what changes you would want to see to know that the early learning system is doing a better job of helping families prepare their children to be healthy, capable and confident in school and life. **How will you know if things are getting better over time?** (Examples: Child learning and development settings from birth through third grade welcome and expect parent involvement; parents feel confident they know what their child needs in order to be ready for the next stage; one service can help them parents get access to other services)*

Washington Early Learning State and Local Coordination Project
Summary of Stakeholder Interviews Conducted March – June 2012

June 19, 2012

Purpose and Approach for the Interviews

The purpose of the stakeholder interview process was to develop a clear understanding of how key individuals and groups perceive the current practices for early learning coordination, and to learn their aspirations and ideas for strengthening the state and local coordination of early learning programs and services in our state. Since the State and Local Coordination Project focuses on systems development and systems reform, the stakeholder interview process included parents and child care providers, but primarily focused on early learning leaders working at the state and local levels.

The interviews were conducted in two formats: (1) with individuals by phone or in person, and (2) with a focus group in person or by conference call. Conducting the interviews were members of the consulting team from Cedar River Group, Dovetailing, and Tu Consulting, and several members of the State-Local Coordination Steering Committee. The interviewers took notes during each interview and wrote up a summary of the responses to each question. There were four slightly different sets of questions (for programs/agencies, for parents and child care providers, for funders, and for agency leaders), but they all covered the same topics in the same order.

What Was Discussed

The questions asked were in six topic areas:

1. What exists to coordinate and plan, what is and is not working, and what is missing
2. Interviewees' ideas to improve coordination
3. How easy or difficult it is for families to access early learning services and programs
4. How well state and local policies, needs and issues are aligned
5. Whether the interviewees had opportunities to voice their views on state/local policy
6. What data sources they use and would like to have, and what signs will signal improvement

Who Was Reached

The people interviewed represented a balance of those working at the state level and those at the local level, and representatives for all areas involved in early learning prenatal through third grade, including parents, child care, preschool, ECEAP, Head Start, public and private schools, tribes, health, mental health, early intervention, special education, family support, licensors, WIC, child care eligibility, libraries, elementary school principals, parenting education, community colleges, and funders. The team aimed for diversity by geographic location (statewide, Eastern and Western Washington), community size (urban, rural, suburban), and race/ethnicity.

The team has interviewed a total of 150 people (34 individuals and 17 focus groups involving 116 people). The racial/ethnic distribution of the interviewees is shown in the table below.

Stakeholder Interview Totals

	# People Interviewed	African-American	Asian/Pacific Islander	Caucasian	Hispanic/Latino	American Indian/Alaska Native
Individuals	34	5	2	19	5	2
Groups	116	4	7	85	8	5
TOTAL	150	9	9	104	13	7
% TOTALS	100%	6.0%	6.0%	69.3%	8.7%	4.7%

What the Stakeholders Shared

Question 1. What state and/or local early learning coordination efforts are you aware of? Which are effective? What is working well? What is not working or missing?*

Awareness: Most of the interviewees were aware of many coordination efforts—some statewide and some specific to an area of early learning or to a geographic area.

Effective/Working Well:

Mentioned by both state and local interviewees:

- Early Learning Coalitions – bring early learning together, though less participation of K-3
- Infant-Toddler Networks – example of how the state coordinated with local organizations; useful sharing at meetings locally and statewide; integrates with early intervention/special needs
- Early Learning Plan and Guidelines created common vision; involvement and input were welcomed

Mentioned by state-level stakeholders:

- Interagency Coordinating Council at state and local levels – important gathering place for a variety of people in early childhood development
- Early Learning Partnership
- WaKIDS – making a stronger connection between early learning providers and families with schools

Mentioned by local-level stakeholders:

- Thrive by Five – e-mail updates
- Head Start and ECEAP Association

* Parents and child care providers were not asked about the coordination efforts they knew of, but were asked what services/programs they use, and what is working/not working or missing.

- Starting Strong Conference – good sharing among preK, K-3 educators and community organizations
- QRIS has promise of structured, data driven, whole child intentionality
- Child care resource and referral agencies
- Local community collaborations and professionals' groups

With respect to what was working well, interviewees responded in terms of what they thought the strengths were of the different organizations and initiatives:

- **Raising awareness:** Early Learning Plan, Early Learning Guidelines, Early Learning Partnership
- **Communication methods/tools:** Department of Early Learning (DEL)'s and Thrive's e-newsletters, Educational Service District (ESD) monthly calls with early learning programs
- **Connecting to information and resources:** Child Care Resource & Referral (CCR&R) agencies, ESDs, WIC, Foundation for Early Learning, WithinReach, Washington Connection, licensing staff
- **P-3 alignment efforts:** State mini-grants, some school districts, child care organization's project for kindergarten transition
- **Data for outcomes tracking:** Starting to be able to use data from OSPI and DOH related to early learning outcomes
- **Early intervention/special education services**
- **Reaching underserved families:** Kaleidoscope Play & Learn groups; ELL partnerships with schools; work of community organizations
- **Help in improving quality:** Child care resource and referrals

Not Working or Missing:

1. **Lack of coordination, working in silos:** Multiple agencies doing similar work; duplications and gaps; conflicting requirements; budget cuts/constraints reduce the resources for coordination; too many initiatives dividing attention and resources; different regulations for the same age group; different regulations for different age groups in a multi-age setting; different eligibility requirements and applications forms; even programs within the same agency have different rules and applications; changes in policy direction are confusing and counterproductive; health needs to be more integrated in early learning

Sample Quotes

"For these important multiagency initiatives to work, someone has to lie awake at night worrying about how to move it forward. There needs to be a designated driver."

"It is hard to talk about increased collaboration at a time when I feel like I need to protect my program's ability to serve our kids and families. The decrease resources and growing needs make me fill like I need to be selfish."

"Effectiveness is very dependent on the relationships with the community and on parent involvement."

2. **Mechanics of services/programs:** No central place to go or source of information about what is available for families; long wait times on the phone; sliding scale fees that de-incentivize parents who are working
3. **Gaps in access:** Limited slots; affordability is a challenge; not enough services/programs in rural areas for non-English-speaking families; hours don't fit parents' work hours
4. **Lack of information/resources for parents:** Need parenting training; information on working with special needs children; need opportunities for parents to meet and share; need more simple, usable and accessible information on child development (e.g., *Getting School Ready* guide, *Love. Talk. Play.*)
5. **Need for cultural and linguistic competence:** Most frequently mentioned by interviewees representing communities of color. Services and programs available do not fit the culture and language for some families; lack understanding of cultural norms and of the sovereign status of tribes; unequal distribution of resources; difficulty of "competing" with Head Start and of meeting regulations; not enough options for English language learner families; need for culturally competent curricula and materials for early learning providers and for parents; not enough bilingual and bicultural providers/teachers
6. **Early intervention/special needs services availability and transition:** Need more information for families; need to build trust; limited slots for children; transition from 0-3 to special ed preschool is confusing; those who do not qualify for special ed need other resources
7. **Need for parent outreach and involvement:** Transition into kindergarten is difficult; difficult for parents to be as involved once children are in kindergarten as they were in their child care and preschool; need for more fathering groups and support
8. **Too many new initiatives and rules changes rolling out at once:** MERIT, Early Achievers, WaKIDS, subsidy changes

Sample Quotes

"Who can tell me what my son needs to transition into kindergarten? Can I get real answers from my child care or preschool teacher? Does the elementary school have time to answer my questions? No one is taking responsibility to link parents to the next system. We need to figure out who will explain to parents what is going on and what is next."

"What is not working is providing funding for programs and then taking it away or shifting it. The families learn not to trust us."

"Parents are hungry for information on child development."

Question 2. What are your ideas to improve state and local coordination of early learning efforts and services? Who should lead these efforts?

Ideas:

- **Create a comprehensive, clear, easy-to-use source for information:** Most frequently mentioned by local stakeholders, parents and providers. Suggested were: a printed or online directory—local versions and a statewide version; a one-page list of what is available with contact information; a frequently asked questions sheet or webpage; one phone number to call to find out what resources are available; a visible place in the community to get information on all

services for children and families; information posted at child care centers, libraries, community centers.

- **Harness technology for information sharing and two-way communication:** Frequently mentioned by local stakeholders, parents and providers. Use a shared meta-website for information sharing; use social media tools (Facebook, etc.) or online surveys to get feedback to agencies on what’s working and what’s not and to ask for suggestions; website for early learning professionals with resources for them and for parents; online, searchable directory of resources for parents; online applications for services
- **Provide opportunities to meet/talk and share information:** Most frequently mentioned by statewide stakeholders. Coordinate the content of the three annual conferences(Starting Strong, WAEYC, and Infant and Early Childhood Conference); range of communication options where locals can share with each other, and local and state staff can talk (annual in-person meeting, Webinars, conference calls, and/or local meetings sending a representative to statewide meeting); regional representatives who meet quarterly with state; meeting of coalitions twice a year; monthly calls; early learning focus at an upcoming Centennial Accord (Governor’s annual meeting with all 29 tribes)
- **Work through child care, schools, community-based groups:** Frequently mentioned by state, local and parent/provider stakeholders. Inform child care and schools what is available to parents, since they are a resource parents trust; build partnerships between child care/schools and public health, food banks, etc.; send agency representatives to child care, etc. to offer classes for parents, and meet with parents and teachers; co-locate services, such as school, preschool, Child Find and health screenings
- **Involve parents:** Hold annual town halls with parents (one to four per county); offer clear ways parents can get involved to help build and guide services; create a single parent engagement process that spans preschool, kindergarten and primary grades; note that involvement needs to be supported by resources; use resource fairs and Play and Learn groups to reach families
- **Increase culturally competent practices:** Work with organizations in each community; connect with families in their own languages and understanding their cultural norms; use established mechanisms, such as Centennial Accord and “Indian Education 101” offered by GOIA; review regulations and practices for cultural competence
- **Support Early Learning Coalitions:** Make sure they cover all of the state; form structured link between ELAC and coalitions; provide staff support

Sample Quotes

“I spend a significant amount of time trying to figure out who to ask.”

“There are two times in a young child’s life when they are a captive audience—birth and school entry. We need to use those times to connect with families.”

“Do the policy work needed to rethink the system to align funds, policy and service delivery, and reduce duplication.”

“Local entities need to drive design of what will work best in their communities.”

- **Work cross-sector:** Involve other agencies in Early Learning Partnership (DOH, DSHS); use the new Developmental Screening Partnership Community to coordinate between early learning and health; establish key liaison roles in DEL for tribes, for health; incentivize cross-program coordination; use existing accreditation structures and agreements (such as independent schools' agreements with State Board of Education); create information-sharing agreements so that parents can use one form for many services and so child data can be tracked;
- **Coordinate at the decision-making level:** Create a child and family council/cabinet at the agency head level with state departments and private organizations; consolidate similar programs and applications
- **Report on key indicators:** Develop a handful of social, health and education indicators (like Communities Count in King County) and report to the public annually
- **Develop a continuous quality improvement (CQI) process:** Focusing on goals and outcomes (possibly using the key indicators), develop a CQI process that helps us understand results and improve our ability to serve *all* children in the state
- **Clarify state and local roles:** State should bring resources and expertise while locals bring understanding of local needs and what will work
- **Flexible approach:** Be creative; think outside the box

Who Should Lead:

- Washington Early Learning Partnership
- Each agency needs to lead connections and increased communication within the different areas of the agency, and between regional office and headquarters
- The funder
- Use a co-leader model—state and local, school district and non-school district
- Coordination needs to be at the state level, while services need to be at the community level.
- Use ESDs and/or CCR&Rs to lead regional work.
- Each community should be engaged in selecting their own lead agency for coordination.

Question 3: How easy or difficult is it for you (as parents) or the families you work with (as service providers) to access early learning services?

Easy:

- **Specific agencies play a helping role:** R&Rs; libraries who partner with public health clinics or child care centers; immigrant community organizations
- **Specific roles to serve as a resource:** Licensors, Family Resource Coordinators (for 0-3 early intervention)
- **Convenient locations:** Child health at community clinics and urgent care is accessible; programs who send a representative to child care to work with children and meet with parents
- **Multiple methods to apply:** Head Start makes it easy to apply in person or online, applications available in many locations

- **Parent involvement encouraged in 0-5:** Head Start, ECEAP and child care encourage parent involvement, have parent advisory councils
- **Generally easy to access:** Head Start, ECEAP, WithinReach, public health, R&Rs

Hard:

- **Daily experiences with the system:** Most frequently mentioned by state stakeholders, parents and child care providers. Different eligibility criteria, forms, application processes; applications are confusing; information requested is duplicative; not all parents have Internet access to fill out online forms; toll-free number less good at assessing needs than in face-to-face assistance; long wait times on the phone; eligibility hard to establish and maintain; lag time between application and notification of benefits; rules on eligibility change; special needs referrals take too long; developmental screening isn't readily available
- **Gaps in services:** Frequently mentioned by state and local stakeholders: Not enough services are available; not enough capacity in existing services; not enough funding; poor access to services in rural and isolated areas; hours for services don't fit parents' schedules
- **Parents don't know where to start:** Don't know what is available in their community or what to look for; hard to learn about and connect with services; many, especially immigrant parents, don't know how to advocate for their children
- **Language and cultural barriers:** Hard for non-English-speaking parents to get information; lack of interpreters; challenges of language and cultural norms for navigating the early intervention system; American Indian families who live outside the reservation have trouble getting information
- **Transportation:** Lack of transportation is a barrier for applying for services, getting to some service locations, and for families with special needs children; also a challenge in rural and isolated areas where services are at a distance
- **Access to and transition for special needs services:** Services sparse in some areas of the state; convincing parents to seek early intervention can be challenging; hard for parents to find child care when accommodations are needed; transition between 0-3 intervention and special ed preschool is confusing; hard date for transition (3rd birthday) can be challenging; transition difficult if child does not qualify for special ed preschool
- **Services disconnected:** Health care does not connect to other children's services; no portal for communication among players in the system or requirement to communicate; no record sharing; information providers don't have information on all services

Sample Quotes

"There are too many steps, and some things they asked for I didn't even know what they were."

"Head Start, ECEAP and developmental preschool are great at parent engagement, but once your child goes to school, you have to fight your way in."

"The state is expecting the same outcomes, but families and children are all starting at different places and have different barriers (e.g., language) to accessing resources."

- **Affordability:** Mentioned by local stakeholders, parents and providers. Family income can be too high for subsidies but still too low to afford private care; co-pays can be confusing and hard to manage financially
- **Parent involvement after preschool:** Harder for parents to connect with teachers in kindergarten and up, and to get involved in child’s learning
- **Generally not easy to access:** DSHS, Child Care Subsidies, Working Connections

Question 4. For local stakeholders: Are state policies aligned and relevant to local needs and issues? For state stakeholders: Are local policies and actions advancing Early Learning Plan goals?*

Local Stakeholders:

Positive comments –

- **Recognition of early learning’s importance:** Seen through increased pre-K-3rd work, Early Learning Guidelines, including social-emotional development in K-3rd
- **Policies generally in the right direction**
- **Standards are aligned**

Negative comments–

- **Policies not aligned, inflexible or changing:** Most frequently mentioned by local organization stakeholders. Head Start and ECEAP differences (school year, staffing required) make it hard to blend programs; Part B and Part C policy and eligibility rules misaligned; changes in state policy (such as TANF eligibility) affect large numbers of families and the programs they rely on; different licensing requirements for mixed age groupings; requirements don’t allow private schools to follow their own mission; changes in training requirements mean that some libraries can’t continue their parent education programs; science and best practices are not embedded in rules and professional standards; state needs to regulate preschool or at least let parents know it doesn’t
- **Insufficient funding:** State provides only the minimum; need far outstrips capacity (e.g., child care subsidies, ECEAP); not enough funding for family, friend and neighbor (FFN) caregiver needs
- **Misfit with local needs, especially for rural areas and communities of color:** Half-day programs don’t work for working families; some requirements difficult to fill in rural areas; big gap in culturally and linguistically appropriate services; policy needs to be clearer about providing outreach and services to minority communities; new Indian curriculum for teacher certification

Sample Quotes
<i>“Just because children don’t meet the eligibility threshold for services doesn’t mean they don’t have needs.”</i>
<i>“[A group of Spanish-speaking care providers] couldn’t meet the state requirements, so in the end they can’t provide and children are left in cars.”</i>
<i>“I’m a little alarmed with the changes in training.”</i>
<i>“We don’t get enough help to determine how to use [state] information/programs locally.”</i>
<i>“One-size-fits-all policies don’t work.”</i>

* Parents and child care providers were not asked this question.

is running into challenges with requirements for endorsement; teacher qualifications are a challenge for tribal community members; professional development and coaching not culturally competent; farm worker and immigrant families may not apply for services because of the information required in applications

State Stakeholders:

- **Good ideas and involvement:** Growing energy around forming partnerships and aligning; many grassroots groups doing good work, but not all are connected with their early learning coalitions; the more active coalitions are getting movement around Early Learning Plan goals
- **Not sure:** Some state stakeholders felt they did not have the information to make a judgment

Question 5. Do you feel you have an opportunity to voice your views on policy and action at the state level (for local stakeholders) / at the local level (for state stakeholders)? (for parents and child care providers) How should parents be involved in working with early learning organizations to improve services for children and families?

Local Stakeholders:

Positive comments –

- **Connect through specific groups:** Most frequent positive response was that local stakeholders make their voice heard through participation in different groups: WASA, Washington Head Start–ECEAP Association, state CCR&R Network, ESDs, ECEAP directors meeting, Early Learning Coalition, professional association, union, independent schools organization, Foundation for Early Learning. Connect through groups that are in contact with legislators.
- **Personal relationships:** Some said they just pick up the phone and call the staff they know
- **Direct opportunity through Early Learning Plan**

Negative comments–

- **No communication channel:** No channel or structure for communicating with the state; don't know how to get plugged in
- **Diverse voices not heard:** Need to build in diverse voices in the early stages of proposals and program planning; minority voices have not been well received; many communities of color don't know how to get access
- **Effect:** Some questioned whether outreach the state does has any effect on the resulting decision/program

Sample Quotes

“Our agency is invited to serve on committees, etc., but we don't always have the time.”

“Parents don't feel they have any voice in what's happening. The people making the policies aren't visible and don't ask for families' input.”

Parents and Child Care Providers:

- **Use in-person contacts and gatherings:** Parent open house combined with a parenting class; ask parents to be volunteers with other parents on a project or serve on an advisory group

- **Use child care and school connections:** Come to child care centers' parent involvement events or advisory meetings; ask center directors what their parents needs; have a school-based parent outreach coordinator
- **Written formats less effective:** Written surveys and web-based forms don't work as well as in-person contact

State Stakeholders:

- **Voice through policy role:** The most frequent response was that the state has a voice because it sets policy and writes standards that locals are required to implement
- **Work with local organizations:** Contact ESDs, R&Rs, Infant-Toddler Network to get feedback on state programs, learn about local needs; talk with local schools when they call with questions; meet with local coalitions and provider groups
- **Personal relationships:** Have voice from building relationships with local programs
- **Time and budget barriers:** Meetings with local groups are limited by time and budget; could encourage participation as part of contract requirements, but this would need to be funded

Question 5. What data or data sources do you use or would you like to have? What would tell you that things have improved?

Data Sources Used:

- **Early Intervention Data System and special ed:** 20 state performance indicators for monitoring Part C and Part B that are specific to early childhood; will align with P-20 database
- **WELS data system:** Newly developed – QRIS assessment data and communicating with the MERIT Child Care Training Database
- **Early Learning Management System (ELMS):** Used now for ECEAP, will be expanding
- **Classroom and child development assessments:** ITERS, ECERS, ELCO, Peabody 4, Dial 3, Teaching Strategies Gold, Dibbles, MAP, Math Benchmark Assessment
- **Program data:** licensing, Head Start, WIC, TANF, Apple Health
- **OSPI, school district and individual school data**
- **ESD data**
- **Health data:** Screening, immunization, pregnancy outcomes (DOH), Urban Indian Health Institute data, county health data
- **State and local census/demographic data:** Data on population, income, health, language, education level, crime rate

Data Would Like to Have:

- **Longitudinal data base:** Central system for both public and private early learning and K-12 student data and health services
- **Student-level tracking and outcomes:** Can track outcomes of children in child care, Head Start/ECEAP, preschool and connect with their school outcomes; student-level data from early learning through 12; data on full-day K students and later student outcomes

- **Family engagement/support and outcomes:** Data on activities and their impact on school success indicators such as attendance and homework completion
- **Data sharing between agencies:** Use technology to preserve privacy and confidentiality, but be able to share data at the child/family level; would like data about services other agencies are providing to the families
- **WaKIDS:** Once statewide, use data to tell how well we're preparing children for kindergarten
- **QRIS:** Once rolled out, data on program quality and how programs advance
- **Culturally appropriate definitions:** How "research-based," "evidence-based," "valid" are defined
- **Disaggregated data:** Need disaggregation at a useful level to really see what the issues are and for whom (e.g., data for African Americans and African immigrants currently lumped together)
- **Effective models**

What Would Indicate Improvement:

- **Big picture view and flexibility:** Everyone keeps the big picture in mind; aim is to meet children's and families needs; approaches are flexible
- **Roles, accountability, alignment, funding:** Formal MOAs and informal relationships among all agencies serving families and children; clear understanding of roles and accountability; connections between early learning and K-12 schools; schools and districts supportive of early learning; improved transition into kindergarten; funding is adequate
- **Equitable access:** All children birth – 5 eligible for services and able to access them; universal preschool; developmental screening for all children; children have medical home
- **Access and application:** Easy ways for families know what is available and to apply; families fill out their demographic and income data only once to apply for multiple services
- **Quality:** Parents demand quality care and all programs are quality rated; top notch skills and better pay for early learning staff; list available of research-based curricula that preschools and schools can choose from; continuous quality improvement of all early learning and K-12 schools
- **Cultural and linguistic competence:** Access and support for families of all cultures and languages in Washington; more culturally-based organizations helping guide families; teachers and schools use a whole-child perspective and attend to multiple ways of learning and children's "funds of

Sample Quotes

"Much data is available, it's finding time to gather it up and organize it that's challenging."

"When the systems begin to work together, like food benefits using the same documentation as child care assistance so we don't have to do the same thing over and over, then we will know that it is working better."

"Think outside the box. Children don't fit in a box. Look at the children's needs first, not the parents' or the system's."

"Listen to and engage parents and communities right from the beginning."

"Incentivize innovations that are tracked to improved outcomes."

knowledge” (culturally developed bodies of knowledge and skills essential for well-being within a family and community)

- **Early intervention/special needs:** All children screened and identified early, and services available; improved transition at age 3; fully funded special needs education
- **Child outcomes:** Increases in grade level performance; increased graduation rate; increased percentage of children with special needs in least restrictive environments; delayed pregnancy; improved health (smoking, weight, etc.); preparation and achievement gaps are closed
- **Parent engagement:** Programs/schools encourage parent engagement and meet with families regularly; families empowered to be involved in child’s education from birth on; parents know what is happening in child’s education and can support learning at home
- **Parenting education:** parenting education is culturally competent, available to all parents; parents understand they are their child’s first teacher
- **Involvement and influence of families of color:** Communities of color and parents involved in early stages of program development and helping to guide implementation
- **Professional development:** Increased training on importance of early learning and family engagement; shared/aligned professional development for 0 – 3rd grade teachers
- **Understanding of importance of early learning:** Consistent messages; increased awareness and understanding of early learning and its importance
- **Centralized data system with disaggregated data:** All children tracked from preschool through 12; data available to professionals at all levels; data disaggregated to be meaningful
- **Communities are thriving**

Appendix H: First Cultural Competence Review by National Equity Project

Washington State and Local Coordination Project for Early Learning Cultural Competence Planning and Review



The National Equity Project considered the following two questions regarding the task of the State and Local Coordination Project for Early Learning:

1. Is our project process/structure set up in a way that will be sensitive to issues of racial and cultural equity? Are there any improvements you would suggest?
2. Is our approach to outreach and communication designed to capture issues regarding racial and cultural equity? Are there any improvements you would suggest?

NEP chose to respond to the questions above by employing a Racial Equity Theory Change (RETOC) tool developed by the Aspen Institute Roundtable on Community Change (2009). Below are 1) high level observations, questions and feedback and 2) specific questions associated with each step of the RETOC process.

Observations, Questions, and Feedback

Observations

1. The overall process is consistent with the 5 steps in the Racial Equity Theory of Change (RETOC) process. The RETOC is both a flexible tool and a process for applying a racial equity lens.⁶ It allows the user to plan or assess a logical sequence of steps/actions to reach a desired outcome while employing a structural racialization framework.⁷
2. The Communications and Outreach plan is well conceived to reach a representative sample of the diversity within the state of Washington.
3. The focus group and interview questions read very generic when applying a racial equity lens. See the question section regarding this observation.

⁶ A **racial equity lens** allows us to uncover the structures, policies, and behaviors that sustain unequal outcomes for children. It offers us a way to look at how the practices, cultural norms and institutional arrangements that help to create and maintain (disparate) racialized outcomes.

⁷ **Structural racialization** refers to the ways in which the joint operation of institutions produce racialized outcomes. Structures matter and are not neutral. They unevenly distribute benefits, burdens, and racialized meaning.

Questions

1. For the focus group questions for parents and early learning professionals, how will you gather individual experiences of cultural inclusion and exclusion? Most of the current questions ask what the individual thinks about existing programs and services. Although these questions will elicit valuable information about how programs and services are perceived and used, in order to gather information about experiences of cultural inclusion and exclusion, additional questions are needed that invite individuals to share how their identity (race, ethnicity, income level, etc...) may be relevant to their early learning needs and experiences.
2. For the interview questions, how will you gather information on what are the differences in opportunities or services based on client identity or geography?

Feedback

1. We recommend that you schedule Cultural Competence Planning/Review (CCPR) meetings at the beginning of Step #4 What You Must Know; Step #3 What Helps & Hinders; and Step#2 Building Blocks. *See Washington Process graphic for a visual of this recommendation.* Each Cultural Competence Planning/Review meeting is an opportunity for an identified team to reflect on methods, information, principles and agreements that will make the upcoming project elements racially and culturally inclusive. Although these CCPR meetings are ideally scheduled at the beginning of each of the steps, they can also be effective as an opportunity for mid-step reflection and adjustment.
2. The instrument used to track outreach is solid with the potential to map the interaction of race and geography in the state.
3. There is currently one set of focus group questions to be used with both parents and early learning professions. For clarity, we recommend that you create two versions of these focus group questions, one for a parent audience and one for an early learning professionals audience.
4. Consider how there could be shared responsibility for holding a racial equity lens by all members of each guiding body (project work group, steering committee, ELAC, Washington Early Learning Partnership). This may require each guiding body reviewing relevant articles or materials about racial equity, and/or agreeing on a set of guiding principles or agreements for racial and cultural inclusion.
5. Consider having a discussion with each guiding body (project work group, steering committee, ELAC, Washington Early Learning Partnership) to identify the documents (e.g., recommendations, guiding principles, committee agreements, community quotes) or other communications that they want to share with the Washington Early Learning Partnership team in order to ensure that the attention to racial equity is carried forward into the final structure decisions and structure implementation.
6. Continuing your practice of reflecting on ways that the language and words that we use guide our actions is a valuable practice. For example, the word “outreach” has the connotation that you are looking for ways for people to access the system but that the system stays pretty much the same. The word “intake” or “inclusion” has the connotation that new individuals groups and cultures are integrated into the system and that the system is changed by that new relationship.

Cultural Competency Planning and Review

RETOC STEPS	PROJECT ELEMENTS	QUESTIONS
What You Must Do <ul style="list-style-type: none"> ▪ Project elements and process to achieve Outcome 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ▪ Work Plan ▪ Communications & Outreach Plan 	<p>Will the <u>intention</u> of greater aligned action result in structures that support greater access to early learning for children furthest away from opportunity?</p>
What You Must Know <ul style="list-style-type: none"> ▪ How power and social capital is distributed ▪ Who you expect to get resistance and support from 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ▪ Best Practices; ▪ Governance; ▪ Stakeholder Interviews ▪ Data Snapshot 	<p>How will you gather individual experiences of cultural inclusion and exclusion?</p> <p>Who has the power to shape and influence the policies, practices and cultural representations (stereotypes and norms) that normalize racial disparities?</p> <p>What are possible sources of retrenchment?</p>
What Helps, Hinders <ul style="list-style-type: none"> ▪ Policies, practices and cultural representations 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ▪ Opportunities, Barriers and Needs Report ▪ Initial Outreach ▪ Feedback from Guiding Bodies & Others ▪ Vetting Outreach 	<p>What are the institutional practices, or protocols and accepted behaviors, that tends to disadvantage people of color?</p> <p>How are these practices sanctioned within organizations? (e.g. – Washington Early Learning Partnerships, ELAC) What cultural representations tend to normalize racial disparities in this area?</p>
Building Blocks <ul style="list-style-type: none"> ▪ Priority vehicles for moving towards the outcome 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ▪ Coordination Structure ▪ State-Local Decision Making Process ▪ Accountability and CQI Data Source 	<p>How will a racial equity lens be embedded into on-going implementation of new structures and processes?</p> <p>What will be the process for ensuring diverse stakeholders are part of the new structures and processes?</p>
Outcome <ul style="list-style-type: none"> ▪ Targeted impact that interrupts historical disparity in opportunity or achievement 	<p>Better Aligned Action, Supporting Children’s Learning</p>	<p>What criteria are currently used to measure or assess existing alignment?</p> <p>How will you measure better alignment that impacts children furthest away from opportunity?</p>

Appendix I: Response to Cultural Competence Review

TO: State and Local Steering Committee Members

FROM: Consultant Team

DATE: May 17, 2012

SUBJECT: Response to Cultural Competency Review

You may recall that we had two cultural competency reviews built into the process, one “up front” that looked at the process that’s been designed for the project, and one on the “back end” when we have recommendations and/or alternatives to review. Attached is a summary of the work the National Equity Project (Victor Cary and Stephen Chang) did to complete the first of the two cultural competency reviews focused on the workflow process for this project.

The National Equity Project reviewed quite a number of materials we sent them describing the work we’re doing, and we had two or three conference calls to explain the process we’re using and answer questions. As a result of that sharing of information they provided the feedback summarized in the attached.

Our team has reviewed their comments and we would offer the following thoughts:

We are pleased with their overall observations: that the process is consistent with the framework they used – a 5 step Racial Equity Theory of Change; and that the “Communications and Outreach Plan” is well conceived to reach diverse audiences and opinions.

They provided six specific points of feedback. Here is a quick summary of their feedback and our reactions/suggestions:

- #1. *Schedule Cultural Competency Planning/Review meetings at the beginning of steps 4, 3 and 2* (see their pdf graphic, titled “Washington SLC Process Cultural Competency Review”). We are well into the step 4 process, but we agree that intentional discussions at the beginning of upcoming steps would be valuable. People have shared some issues related to cultural exclusion in the interviews and focus groups and we will have the opportunity to gather broader input in the upcoming public comment process.
- #2. *The instrument used to track outreach, in particular the characteristics and diversity of who we have reached, is solid.* This is good confirmation to have.
- #3. *Create two versions of the focus group questions for parents and early learning professionals.* We have completed our focus groups with parents and providers. Those conducting the focus groups attempted to “individualize” the discussions depending on the audience. We found that our groups of parents and providers were forthcoming and actively engaged in the group discussions.

- #4. *Consider how to create shared responsibility for holding a racial equity lens by all guiding bodies connected with the project. This may include review of relevant materials and/or agreeing on guiding principles for racial equity and inclusion.* We certainly intend to discuss racial equity/inclusion with the Steering Committee and ELAC. We'll work with staff to consider when/how to discuss these issues with the Washington Early Learning Partnership. We would welcome suggestions about relevant resources on the topic. Since Thrive has been doing quite a bit of work in this area they may have good ideas about what resources could be helpful. Also, we will be discussing guiding principles at the May 22nd Steering Committee meeting and that could include discussion about how to integrate principles regarding racial equity.
- #5. *Have discussions with ELAC and the Steering Committee about the documents/communications they want to share with the Partnership to ensure that attention to racial equity is included in final decisions.* We believe this will be part of the discussion around developing recommendations.
- #6. *Continue to reflect on the appropriate use of language. As an example, use the terms "inclusion" or "intake" instead of "outreach".* We will limit our use of the term outreach, and where appropriate, use other terms as suggested. We will keep asking ourselves whether the language we are using in all documents is appropriate to achieve an inclusive process.

We of course welcome your ideas and suggestions for additional ways that we can incorporate this work into our project. We look forward to discussing this with you on May 22nd.

Appendix J: Round 1 Engagement Survey: Summary of Results

Below is first a summary of what the 175 respondents to the survey said in response to the questions, followed by a summary of who responded.

I. What Respondents Said

Question 1: How well does the list of Key Barriers describe what makes it hard to find or use early learning services and programs in Washington state?

Key Barriers to Services:

1. It is hard for families to access the services they need.
2. There are not enough providers for some types of services.
3. There are not enough people who meet professional standards in some parts of the state and in some communities of color.
4. Too few early learning and K-12 teachers have the preparation and tools to support children’s learning in developmentally- and culturally-competent ways.
5. It is hard for families to find information and to “navigate” the system.
6. The transition from early learning to elementary school is tough for families.
7. Some communities, such as rural areas and refugee and immigrant communities, are isolated and have unique challenges.
8. Too few state and local leaders and providers know about programs, issues and plans outside their program “silos.”
9. There is not enough two-way communication and planning among the state and local communities.
10. There are no common measures of program, system and child outcomes that both the state and local communities use to show value and focus improvements.
11. Agencies use different geographic boundaries for their initiatives.

Total responses: 172. More than 90 percent of respondents to this question said the list described the key barriers well (rating of 3 or 4, with 4 as the highest). Here is the tally of responses.

Rating	Count	Percent
4 (Very Well)	95	55.2%
3	61	35.5%
2	13	7.6%
1 (Not well)	3	1.7%

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Average rating: 3.44	Total: 172	
	Skipped question: 3	

Comments to Question 1: (Total responses: 72.) Many of the comments to Question 1 were about items the respondents didn't see or wanted to emphasize in the "Key Barriers" list. Since these were also the themes of the comments to Question 2, the two sets of comments are combined under Question 2, below.

Question 2: Is there anything not accurate or missing from the list of Key Barriers? If so, please describe.

(Total responses to Question 2: 73.) Adding the comments to Question 1 gives responses from a total of 145 respondents. Note that each "response" could include comments regarding more than one of the barriers.

There were four types of comments: (a) Some respondents added more details to one or more of the statements of barriers; (b) some respondents suggested additional barriers; (c) a few respondents disagreed with or raised concerns about some of the barrier statements; and (d) some respondents suggested solutions (solutions comments are combined with the comments on the list of opportunities, under Question 4 below).

In the summary below, the comments are grouped into categories. The number after each category indicates the number of comments.

Responses Adding Detail to the List of Barriers:

- Barriers 1 and 5 – It is hard for families to access services, find information, navigate the system:
 - *Information needs (18 comments)**: Information is not available in places parents frequent. Parents are overwhelmed. They don't even know there is a system or that programs exist. There is no reliable information for choosing child care. There needs to be more outreach to parents. Lack of understanding by parents of the importance of early learning. Need for parenting education.
 - *Economic and social issues (9)*: Parents' challenging life circumstances: low literacy, limited education, unstable living conditions, health challenges, etc. are barriers. Lack of parenting classes, ESL classes, and opportunities to gain citizenship.
 - *Physical access (8)*: Need for transportation (especially in rural areas), and agencies/services not open during the hours parents are available.
 - *Child care (7)*: Challenges with child care subsidies, including barriers through policies and procedures, and long waiting list.
 - *Diversity (6)*: Lack of informal, culturally relevant opportunities for families to learn about early learning and school readiness, and of "cultural navigators." Need for translation.
 - *Engagement with parents (3)*: Authentic community engagement is needed to learn what parents want and need. Lack of support for parents as their child's first teacher.
 - *Rewrite #1 (1)*: It is hard for families to access and/or pay for the services they need.
- Barriers 2 and 3 – There are not enough providers, or people who meet professional standards:

* The number in parentheses after a comment topic indicates the number of comments on that topic.

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- *Teacher pay (9)*: Low pay for teachers in early learning makes it difficult to get well-educated and qualified teachers, and to keep good staff.
- *Professional standards (9)*: Standards rely too heavily on degrees. Need to accept experience and obtainable credentials, and use continuing education. The new MERIT system will create barriers to having qualified staff. K-3 teachers should be required to have an early childhood certificate.
- *Diversity (6)*: Reframe #3 as: “There are not enough qualified people in teaching positions who culturally and linguistically reflect the communities they serve.” Children need to see teachers who look like them.
- *Requirements (4)*: High licensing costs and requirements to having a home-based child care result in experienced providers closing up and unlicensed providers caring for more children.
- *Providers needed (3)*: Need for more services regarding behavioral and mental health issues.
- Barrier 4 – There are not enough tools for EL and K-12 teachers to support children’s learning:
 - *Communication methods (4)*: DEL relies “primarily if not solely” on electronic contacts, which puts the responsibility on providers and trainers. Online services are not as available in rural areas. Too much information and it’s often confusing.
 - *Training needs (3)*: K-3 teachers don’t have the training to meet the needs of bilingual children or children with severe behavioral needs.
 - *Connections needed (2)*: Hard for providers to know how to locate resources. Hard to find out about opportunities to partner with providers/schools serving other ages.
- Barrier 5 – See Barrier 1, above
- Barrier 6 – Transition into school:
 - *Alignment (12)*: No common understanding between preschool/child care and K-12 as to what is developmentally appropriate. No forum for communication between child care and local schools. More should participate in opportunities like the Starting Strong conference. GOLDS system is not in line with what kindergarteners need to know at K entry. K-12 schools don’t pay attention to social-emotional development or developmental milestones, or know enough about child development. K-12 focuses on children as “students,” not as “children.”
 - *Diversity (3)*: Gap for transition is especially large for families who speak other languages and for communities of color. Opportunity/achievement gap in most school systems.
- Barrier 7 – Unique challenges for rural areas and refugee/immigrant communities:
 - *Diversity (7)*: Language barriers; citizenship/immigration status.
 - *Providers (7)*: More use of family, friend and neighbor providers for continuity of culture or because of fewer choices. Lack of providers of early intervention and diagnosis; home visiting. Isolation of providers in rural areas.
 - *Local differences (5)*: Vast differences between different parts of the state. All communities have unique challenges, but the barriers differ in severity from one community to another.
- Barrier 8 – Leaders and providers are in silos:
 - *Relationships (13)*: Lack of relationships and planning structures across organizations and ages. Lack of common measures, preparation and tools make it hard to come together to work on issues. No mechanism to promote coordination and collaboration.
 - *Out of touch (7)*: Policies are out of touch with needs at the local level. Lack of strategy to match services to needs. Lack of knowledge about what is available in each community.

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- *Internal silos (5)*: Silos within agencies as well as between agencies. Licensors can't answer questions about other programs within DEL.
- *Health (3)*: Health needs to be integrated into early learning, especially at the state level.
- Barrier 9 – Not enough state-local two-way communication:
 - *Communication and involvement (6)*: Online communication, emails and listservs are not enough. DEL needs to open up opportunities to be involved in planning/commenting on new initiatives.
 - *Consistency (2)*: Inconsistent communication and messages from various agencies. Add federal level into the communication loop.
- Barrier 10 – No common measures:
 - *Measures (2)*: Lack of measures/tools and of information to understand the measures. Will WaKIDS become a common measure?
 - *Standards (1)*: Lack of common standards for quality across all programs, including early intervention, Title I, special education.
- Barrier 11 – Different geographic boundaries:
 - *Consistency (3)*: Boundaries need to be consistent to make sure information and opportunities are available to all providers and trainers.
 - *Not working (3)*: Present system of early learning regions does not work, especially in rural areas. Communities on the borders with Oregon and Idaho have special challenges.

Suggested Additional Barriers:

- *Funding-related (28 comments)*: Lack of commitment to the value of early learning, as seen in the lack of funding. Competition among programs for funding. Challenges of navigating multiple funding sources. Huge caseloads for state workers. State's vendor payment is insufficient to cover the costs services. Long waiting lists for Head Start/ECEAP. The difficulty for low- and middle-income families to afford the cost of child care. Cost of early learning services—average \$718/month, with an average annual cost of \$8,613, which is more than in-state college tuition.
- *Public understanding (5)*: Lack of community knowledge and support. Need public understanding of the importance of early learning for preventing future social problems, and of brain development research and ACEs data.
- *Program changes (4)*: Closing R&R offices will make parent referrals less helpful and reduce resources for providers. Programs like QRIS and MERIT are a "waste of money"—funds instead should go into effective programs.
- *Intervention (3)*: Difference in the criteria school districts use for ages 3 – 5 intervention services and those for birth to 3 makes it hard for children over 3 to get support.
- *Diversity (3)*: Institutionalized racism.
- *Health (2)*: Lack of medical homes. Lack of knowledge about early learning by family practice physicians.
- *Multiple barriers (2)*: The presence of multiple barriers is, itself, a barrier, as with multiple ACEs for children.

Disagreements or Concerns About Barriers Listed:

- *Nature of the barriers (5 comments)*: #5, #9 and #10 may be true but are not barriers for families. #6 seems like a result of other barriers.

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- *Measures (1):* #10 is not desirable (“Common measures create common people.”)

Question 3: How well does the list of Key Opportunities describe ways to make early learning services and programs in Washington state more useful for children and families?

Key Opportunities to Improve State and Local Coordination of Services:

1. Create an easy way for all families to learn about and access early learning, family support and health services.
2. Engage and empower the families and communities whose children are experiencing the greatest disparities to help plan services and monitor progress and results.
3. PROMOTE EARLY LEARNING PARTNERSHIPS THAT CAN COORDINATE LOCAL EARLY LEARNING EFFORTS IN EVERY PART OF THE STATE.
4. CREATE INTENTIONAL, FORMAL CONNECTIONS AND TWO-WAY COMMUNICATION BETWEEN STATE AND REGIONAL COORDINATING BODIES.
5. STRENGTHEN STATE-LEVEL COORDINATION OF EARLY LEARNING, FAMILY SUPPORT, HEALTH AND CHILD WELFARE SERVICES ACROSS AGENCIES AND ORGANIZATIONS.
6. CREATE A CONSISTENT, SINGLE PLACE FOR COMMUNITY AND SCHOOL LEADERS TO LEARN ABOUT PLANNED AND NEW STATE INITIATIVES.
7. SELECT A HANDFUL OF MEANINGFUL GOALS AND INDICATORS TO MONITOR PROGRESS AND RESULTS FOR YOUNG CHILDREN AND THEIR FAMILIES STATEWIDE AND LOCALLY.
8. CREATE STATE AND LOCAL QUALITY IMPROVEMENT (CQI) PROCESSES TO UNDERSTAND WHAT IS AND IS NOT WORKING WELL, AND IDENTIFY WAYS TO IMPROVE SERVICES AND SYSTEMS.
9. CREATE A CONSISTENT FRAMEWORK AND UNIVERSAL VALUES TO GUIDE THE DEVELOPMENT OF NEW INITIATIVES AND SYSTEM BUILDING EFFORTS.
10. Provide more opportunities that set statewide funding goals and accountability measures and allow the flexibility for communities to tailor implementation plans to meet local needs.
11. PROMOTE PUBLIC AWARENESS OF EARLY LEARNING’S IMPORTANCE AND STRENGTHEN PUBLIC WILL TO SUPPORT CHILDREN’S SUCCESS.

Total responses: 155. Eighty-six percent of respondents to this question said the list described the key opportunities well (rating of 3 or 4, with 4 as the highest). Here is the tally of responses.

Rating	Count	Percent
4 (Very Well)	71	45.8%
3	63	40.6%
2	17	11.0%
1 (Not well)	4	2.6%
Average rating: 3.3	Total: 155 Skipped question: 20	

Comments to Question 3. (Total comments: 57.) Many of the comments to Question 3 were about items the respondents didn’t see or wanted to emphasize in the list of key opportunities. Since these were also the themes of the responses to Question 4, the two sets of responses are combined under Question 4, below.

Question 4: Is there anything not accurate or missing from the list of Key Opportunities? If so, please describe.

(Total responses to Question 4: 60.) Adding to the comments to Question 3 gives responses from a total of 117 respondents. Note that each “response” could include comments on more than one of the opportunities.

There were four types of comments: (a) Some respondents added more details to one or more of the statements of opportunities; (b) some respondents suggested additional opportunities; (c) a few respondents disagreed with or raised concerns about some of the opportunities; and (d) some respondents described barriers (these comments are combined under Question 2 above.)

In the summary below, the comments are grouped into categories. The number next to each category indicates the number of comments.

Responses Adding Detail to the List of Opportunities:

- 1 – Create an easy way for families to learn about and access supports and services
 - *Build on existing sources (10 comments):* Change the wording to “Continue to develop/refine and build easy ways for all families . . .” Make use of Within Reach, ParentHelp 123, WA Connection, 211, CHILd Profile. Combine with the Help Me Grow developmental screening initiative. Train everyone who works with families about these. Create a simple directory of providers so families can go directly to the source. Use public libraries to publicize. Mount a public service campaign to spread the word.
 - *Use in-person opportunities (6):* Get information to families through the agencies they already are accessing. Don’t assume all have Internet access. Use the health care system to reach parents; train health care providers; provide information and referral when families bring children for immunizations. Use the housing model of a “no wrong door” approach. Does not need to be a single place. What is “easy” for families is not online or a phone number, but a family supportive approach, such as community-based and school-based liaisons.
 - *Involve and empower families (5):* Increase opportunities for parenting classes and offer them where other services are offered. Normalize participating in your child’s early learning in ways that are fun and easy to do, such as the Baby Center’s weekly emails. Empower all families to seek early learning solutions that are best for them, including self-help and parent co-ops. Increase the number of care options available.
 - *Address cultural needs (2):* Provide translated materials.
- 2 – Engage and empower families with the greatest disparities
 - *Empower (4):* (related to both #1 and 2) Help members of the community engage with each other to increase empowerment. In other words, support families who *have* successfully accessed programs to help reach out to their “peer” families who might not be aware, or who are having trouble. Train everyone working with families and children in how to support family engagement and empowerment. Strengthen families to increase protective factors. Ideal, but these families are typically just struggling to survive each day.
 - *All-some-few approach (3):* Broaden to include all families using the all-some-few approach. Ensure that whatever is built is accessible regardless of economic and social status.

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- *Example (2)*: A successful example is the comprehensive outreach WIC clinics do with these families.
- *Co-location and incentives (2)*: (related to both #1 and 2) Infuse early learning education into basic services that families often access (doctors/clinics, housing & food resources, job placement services). Provide incentives to participate (like increased help or further education) for families who meet risk factors.
- 3 – Promote local partnerships
 - *Groups to engage (8)*: Engage trainers in a more authentic way and create a state-level network beyond MERIT. Trainers can help disseminate information. Educate and engage school district superintendents and medical providers. Partner with local schools and with other local agencies that offer family-oriented programs, such as libraries, park districts, and faith-based organizations. Develop local *and* statewide partnerships with health agencies and DSHS, both in working with families and for data sharing. Truly local early learning partnerships are an excellent place for families to be involved and connect to state work—if structured to make family participation possible and meaningful—power must be shared.
 - *Tactics (7)*: Develop interagency agreements that allow for sharing of information between partners to assist families transferring or using multiple agencies. Create local coordinating councils comprised of all early learning services, including special education. Local control is key. Important that different resources become more aware of each other; cross-train all resources. Use community cafes and ask about local gaps and strengths. Fund all coalitions (“Thrive and non-Thrive early learning coalitions needs to be cleaned up”).
 - *Align through 3rd grade (3)*: Change #3 to: “Promote early learning partnerships that can coordinate local early learning and K-3 efforts in every part of the state.” We don’t yet have a common understanding that early learning is through 3rd grade.
 - *Example (1)*: Island County is a great model of how agencies coordinate through monthly meetings.
- 4 – Create state-regional connections and two-way communication
 - *Funding (2)*: Thrive should coordinate with local/regional coalitions re fund development. Provide financial support for those who take the time to participate in collaborations—travel reimbursement, continuing education credit, administrative support.
 - *Communications (2)*: Improve communication at all levels: among local, regional and state, and within the local level. Improve communication within and between agencies, such as on MERIT, subsidy, and licensing.
- 5 – Strengthen state-level coordination across agencies and organizations
 - *Alignment (5)*: Focus on P-3rd grade alignment. DEL and OSPI need to truly align their policies and work, which adds to costs and contributes to families’ confusion. Early learning should be part of the state’s education system.
 - *Local needs (1)*: Address local needs—state-level organizations usually aren’t attuned to local.
- 6 – Create a single place for local leaders to learn about new state initiatives
 - *Broaden description (4)*: Change the description to include service providers, and colleges and universities. Add: “incorporate Strengthening Families protective factors and include the work that will be done by the ACE’s Public-Private Partnership Initiative group.”
- 7 – Select a handful of meaningful goals and indicators
 - *Alignment (2)*: Needs to include both early learning and K-12 measures and align with entry kindergarten goals and indicators.

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- *Diversity (2)*: Need disaggregated data.
 - *Tactics (1)*: Use a “collaborative impact” approach.
- 8 – Create state and local CQI processes
 - No comments.
- 9 – Create consistent framework and universal values
 - *Alignment (3)*: Need to align early learning and K-12. Use the Early Learning Plan.
 - *Tactics (3)*: Use the groundswell of work and interest around ACES to develop tools and inform values. Use the Strengthening Families/Protective Factors framework for consistency and strengths-based values.
- 10 – Provide statewide goals and accountability measures and allow communities to tailor
 - *Voice (4)*: Local, especially rural, communities need to have a voice.
- 11 – Promote public awareness and strengthen public will
 - *Message (5)*: Use a clear message that learning begins at birth. Emphasize the science on the importance of supporting relationships and the impact of ACEs. Use appealing TV ads. Use the term “early childhood” instead of “early learning,” since people think of early learning as preschool and formal programs.
 - *Policy makers (5)*: This should be a goal for every community and to win local legislators. United Ways have been good at this. Educate state and local policy makers about opportunities and barriers in their communities. Promote early learning as an important part of education reform.
 - *Audiences (4)*: Parents and providers also need a better understanding of the importance of early learning. Encourage volunteers, especially among senior citizens. Use incentives for businesses to have employee volunteer programs.

Suggested Additional Opportunities:

- *Funding (18 comments)*: Provide steady and reliable funding sources. Leverage resources. Fund training and professional development. Fund early learning to support qualified teachers and full benefits. Make early learning universal. Find ways to make care more affordable for low- and middle-income families. Fund early intervention services adequately, since services at an early age often avoid more needs later. Fund family liaisons in school and the work of teachers outside the school to promote kindergarten transition. Expand ECEAP to serve all four-year-olds. More realistic compensation to preschools from DEL.
- *Use what works (9)*: Build on what works and what exists. For example, several communities have good kindergarten transition programs, built mostly with local funds. Start by identifying “fixes” that are more easily put in place for early wins. Work together instead of duplicating efforts; streamline existing services rather than adding new ones. Actually serve more children with something that works. Let the market drive the supply of quality child care and parent education.
- *Diversity (5)*: Add more diversity (ethnic/racial, cultural, language) at the leadership level. Promote ESL. Identify culturally diverse members of the community and train them to expand the skills, competency and quality of services offered in the local community. Children’s Hospital is a good model for serving diverse families.
- *Relationships (4)*: Focus on face-to-face contact and relationship building to provide appropriate services, not bureaucracy and top-down planning. Treat early learning providers as professionals.
- *Professional development (4)*: Change MERIT requirements to reduce the bar for trainers who are already licensed health professionals. Increase professional development opportunities and the new short certificates in community and technical colleges. Promote more in-person, peer-to-peer coaching for care

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providers, and more coaching and on-site instruction from trainers to providers and educators. Require joint professional development for early learning and K-3rd teachers.

- *Local planning (4)*: State could help fund Early Learning Consortia in local communities, asking all major providers of early learning services to meet together with four agenda items: "What are the barriers to access in our community?" "How can we each adjust to address these barriers?" "What are our strengths/opportunities to improve?" "How can we work together to leverage these opportunities?" Ask each community to develop a local Plan for Early Learning Advancement, listing strengths to be leveraged, weaknesses, and developing a funding plan and an advocacy plan. Offer organizational development for public and community-based organizations to identify common goals and priorities. Create a master list of what needs to be available in communities for children and families to have an effective early learning system (bare bones version and Cadillac), so locals can make choices.
- *Social issues (3)*: Address income inequality and un/under-employment; families' basic needs must be in place first. Address poverty as a deterrent to quality early learning.
- *Licensing (2)*: Offer licensors and child care directors more flexibility in meeting licensing requirements and to build positive relationships. Increase licensing requirements for teachers of young children.
- *Rural areas (2)*: Find ways to help rural and isolated communities; fund outreach and assistance personnel to travel there. Address issues of distance and travel in rural areas.
- *Monitoring (2)*: Streamline by coordinating the monitoring/accountability in child care.
- *Feedback (1)*: Provide opportunities to offer honest input through confidential channels on specific areas that need to be changed or strengthened.

Disagreements or Concerns About Opportunities Listed:

- *Confusing (9 comments)*: Not clear what they mean. Too wordy and hard to understand. "Coordinate" is too vague as an objective. List is bureaucratic and paternalistic. Too complex; too many agencies creating too many pamphlets. Not clear why #3 is "local" and #4 is "regional."
- *Implementation (5)*: How will these ideas be carried out? What do they mean in practice? How will they be funded? Will programs be cut? List is top-heavy with processes, structures, monitoring, awareness campaigns. What we need is on-the-ground programs and support for families.
- *Centralization (3)*: The "single place" in #6 (to learn about new state initiatives) is probably not achievable. There is too much centralization of power as it is.
- *Outcomes and indicators (2)*: #7 (meaningful goals and indicators) has pitfalls. "Meaningful outcomes" are different for each child. We need to train professionals to be "child-based data-reporters, not state-based test givers." Concern that universalizing standards (#9) would dilute the voice of each individual and family.

Question 5: Which of the Opportunities do you believe are most important? (Note: The instructions said "Check up to 3," but the survey allowed any number to be marked. Some respondents marked more than three, some three, and some fewer.)

(Total respondents: 158.) The list below is in order from the most to the least number of checkmarks.

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# Who Checked	% Who Checked	Opportunity
85	53.8%	#1. Create an easy way for all families to find out about and access early learning, family support and health services.
70	44.3%	#11. Promote public awareness of early learning's importance and strengthen public will to support children's success.
60	38.0%	#3. Promote early learning partnerships that can coordinate local early learning efforts in every part of the state.
47	29.7%	#2. Engage and empower the families and communities whose children are experiencing the greatest disparities to help plan services and monitor progress and results.
44	27.8%	#10. Provide more opportunities that set statewide funding goals and accountability measures and allow the flexibility for communities to tailor implementation plans to meet local needs.
38	24.1%	#5. Strengthen state-level coordination of early learning, family support, health and child welfare services across agencies and organizations.
34	21.5%	#7. Select a handful of meaningful goals and indicators to monitor progress and results for young children and their families statewide and locally.
28*	17.7%	#12. Other (please describe): <i>[See comments below]</i>
26	16.5%	#8. Create state and local quality improvement (CQI) processes to understand what is and is not working well, and identify ways to improve services and systems.
20	12.7%	#6. Create a consistent, single place for community and school leaders to learn about planned and new state initiatives.
18	11.4%	#4. Create intentional, formal connections and two-way communication between state and regional coordinating bodies.
14	8.6%	#9. Create a consistent framework and universal values to guide the development of new initiatives and system building efforts.
Total: 484 checkmarks		

*At least 10 of the "Other" responses are comments on the 11 listed opportunities, not additional opportunities.

Comments for #12 Other:

Ten of the 28 people who checked "Other" wrote about one or more of the 11 listed opportunities, rather than suggesting something new. These are combined with the responses to Questions 3 and 4 above. Listed below are the new opportunities that were suggested.

- *Local focus (3 comments):* House early learning services in family support centers, since they are community-based, and designed and led by families. Create a systematic structure for supporting coordination at the local level, and between the local and state levels, such as a statewide coordinating council with local (county or regional counterparts), like the special education model under IDEA.
- *Alignment (2):* Make OSPI responsible for early learning so that it is funded, truly aligned and available to all.

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- *Diversity (2)*: Immigrant parents are the key since they have sacrificed so their children can get a good education. Create a system run by people of color. Hire people from the communities who speak the languages. Ask them what they want. Pay them to rally their peers and empower them. Make sure all materials are available in Spanish and other languages.
- *System (2)*: Create a formal state plan for coordination of services with goals, objectives and indicators of progress with clear benchmarks and measures. The work to improve coordination and create a more accessible integrated system will require personnel (consulting and support to create sustainable relationships), fiscal resources for community-level work, and an intentional communication plan for gathering lessons learned to inform planning and decision-making from state to local, and local to state.
- *Licensing (2)*: Increase minimum licensing requirements for teacher education from 20 hours of training to a 47-credit certificate. Crack down on and fine unlicensed providers.
- *Direct services (2)*: Provide more funding for early education and realistic compensation for providers. “Stop all the small initiatives and projects. “Instead of promoting coordination and monitoring, provide adequate funding for direct services so children receive quality care and education.
- *Concerns and questions (2)*: More important for whom? “Much of this only benefits and justifies your own ideas of what you feel needs to happen. Is listening to the community really that difficult?”

Question 6: Do you have recent examples where better coordination among programs and services would have led to better results for children and families?

(Total responses: 66.) Five respondents did not offer an example or had too many to write up. Most respondents provided examples where better coordination was needed; 14 provided examples of good coordination; four questioned whether coordination is the major problem that should be addressed.

Examples Where Better Coordination Was Needed

The subject matter and number of examples were as follows:

- Specific state policies and programs (subsidies, MERIT, early intervention, QRIS, resource and referral, child care consulting, WaKIDS, CCF and Family Policy Council): 12 examples
- 0-3 early intervention and 3-5 school-based services: 5 examples
- Information and services for families: 5 examples
- Challenges for rural communities: 4 examples
- Outreach and community engagement: 4 examples
- P-3 alignment: 3 examples
- Partnership opportunities: 2 examples
- Training and professional development: 2 examples
- Transition into kindergarten: 1 example
- Other government programs: 1 example

Examples of Good Coordination

- Strategies and programs: 6 examples (preschool with quality curriculum, training and assessment; reaching out to natural leaders; free community classes and programs; transition to kindergarten programs; Informing Families Building Trust [DDC and DDD program]; WaKIDS pilots)
- P-3 alignment: 5 examples (Ready for Kinder! training; partnerships between preschools/Head Starts and kindergarten teachers/elementary school staff to help families with transition; P-3 Early Literacy Alignment Project in ESD #189 and pilot sites; preK-3rd alignment in areas such as Anacortes, Bremerton, Yakima and Auburn)
- Coalitions and partnerships: 4 examples (Eye on Early Learning Coalitions; First Five Fundamentals in Pierce County; public libraries as partners; community planning effort with families and key partners)

Questions re Whether Coordination Is the Major Challenge

- 4 comments

II. Who Responded

Comments received. Comments were received from 174 people, of which 171 came through Survey Monkey and 3 were emailed. Additionally, 1 set of comments was received as formal comments representing an organization.

Geographic location. 77 respondents provided zip code information. The regions they cover include:

Geographic region of respondents (n=77)	
Northwest	16
Southwest	9
King	9
Pierce	8
Peninsulas	9
South Sound	4
North Central	5
South Central	2
Northeast	2
Southeast	13

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Early learning roles. The table below summarizes respondents' primary roles in relation to early learning. The roles are relatively even distributed among the categories, with the top three (50 or more respondents) being child care and preschool, preparation and training of early childhood professionals, and advocate or volunteer.

Roles of Individual Respondents (n=137)	
Family member or family caregiver	44
Child care and preschool	59
K-12 school system	36
Preparation and training of early childhood professionals/teachers	56
Early interventions or special education	35
Health and mental health	37
Social services or child welfare	26
Advocate or community volunteer	50
Funder (local government, business, philanthropy)	16
Public library	13
Other	13

Organizational affiliations. 75 respondents provided their organizational affiliations. These are listed below (organizations identified more than once are noted in parentheses).

- American Academy of Pediatrics, WCAAP
- Anacortes Public Library
- Asotin County Library
- Bellevue College
- Bellevue School District
- Bellingham Public Schools
- Benton Franklin Early Learning Coalition
- Benton Franklin Head Start
- Benton Franklin Health District
- Bethel Public Schools
- Burbank Library
- Catholic Family & Child Service (2)
- Child Care Aware (2)
- Child Care Aware Central Washington
- Children's Home Society of Washington (2)
- Children's Museum of Tacoma
- Columbia County Public Health
- Community Action Connections
- Community Cafes
- Community Volunteer
- Concerned member of the human race
- DEL (2)
- Department of Health
- Early Learning Services
- ECEAP
- Edmonds Community College
- Educational Training Partners
- ESD 105
- Ferndale School District
- First 5 Fundamentals

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- Fort Vancouver Regional Library
- Gorge Early Learning Coalition
- Greater Pierce County Community Network
- Head Start/ECEAP - Tacoma Public Schools
- Holly Ridge Center
- Jamestown S'Klallam Tribe
- Jefferson County Public Health
- KBTC Public Television
- Kent School District
- League of Education Voters (organizational response)
- Lincoln High School
- Longview School District
- Lopez Children's Center
- Lower Columbia Head Start/ECEAP
- Lower Elwha Klallam Tribe
- Olympic College Student
- Orcas Island School District
- Planned Parenthood
- Port Townsend School District
- Public Health (3)
- Public Health Seattle & King County
- Reach Out and Read Washington State
- San Juan County ECEAP
- San Juan County Health & Community Services
- Save the Children/Lake Quinault School District
- Self-employed
- Shoreline Community College
- Skagit Valley College
- Spokane County Library District
- Tacoma 360
- United Way of Benton & Franklin Counties
- United Way of Clallam County
- University of Washington College of Education
- Volunteers of America
- Washington Commission on Asian Pacific American Affairs
- Wee Care of Stevenson
- Western Washington University
- Whatcom Community College
- Whatcom County Library System
- Women's Resource Center
- WSU Vancouver
- YWCA Clark County

Racial or ethnic background. Among 65 respondents who provided this data in response to an open-ended question, 51 indicated they are Caucasian/white, 7 identified as Hispanic, 3 said they are Asian, 2 identified as Native American, 1 said they are "Native/Caucasian", 1 stated they are "32% minority," and 0 identified as African American.

Constituencies. Respondents were asked if they are involved in any particular geographic areas, communities or groups. The responses, from 113 people, covered a wide range of stakeholders. These are grouped below into several categories, with numbers in parentheses indicating number of responses.

Geographic Areas

- Benton County
- Central Washington (2)
- City of Everett
- Clark County
- County level work
- Cowlitz County
- Eastern Washington with populations under 2880
- Five county region
- Garfield County
- King County (2)
- Klickitat County
- National level work
- Okanogan County
- Pierce County (5)
- Rural community (40)
- San Juan Islands
- Seattle (2)
- Skagit County
- Skamania County
- Statewide (6)
- Suburban (3)
- Urban (8)
- Wahkiakum County
- Whidbey Island
- White Center
- Whitman County
- Yakima County

Early Learning Organizations & Coalitions

- Anacortes Early Learning Partners
- Benton-Franklin Early Learning Alliance
- Birth to Three Forum
- Child and Adult Care Food Program
- Early Childhood Teacher Preparation Council
- Early Learning Action Alliance (2)
- Early Learning Coalition (32)
- Early Learning Public Library Partnership (3)
- Early Support for Infants and Toddlers Program.
- Family Child Care Association of Pierce County
- First 5 Fundamentals (3)
- Interdisciplinary Infant Toddler Task Force
- Longview Early Education Partnership
- Love.Talk.Play.
- North Central Early Learning Coalition
- Northwest Early Learning Coalition
- Organization for Parenting Education Programs (2)
- Our Babies Can't Wait
- P-3 Alignment Collaborative Working Group (2)
- Pierce County AEYC
- Snohomish County AEYC
- Snohomish County Early Learning Coalition
- SOAR (3)
- Steering Committee for Infant/toddler consulting project
- The Partnership for Children and Families
- WAKids/Thrive by Five/Getting School Ready! early learning process
- Washington Association for the Education of Young Children (5)
- Whatcom Early Learning Alliance (3)
- WWELC

Child Care and Preschool

- Child Care Providers (4)
- Child Care Aware
- Child Care Resource & Referral
- Cooperative Preschools serving 1/3 children from multiracial or non-Caucasian families
- CSHEL
- Head Start/Early Head Start
- Licensed Latina Child Care Providers
- Non-profit preschool
- Orcas Island Preschool Collaboration Group
- Preschool, infant
- QRIS
- Stars/Merit trainer for childcare providers
- Trainer for local child care providers in both English and Spanish

Culturally Diverse Communities

- A community where over 40% of individuals were born outside of the U.S. and 83 languages are spoken in the public schools
- American Indian tribal communities (6)
- Asian American and Pacific Islander Community
- Diverse, multi-cultural communities (7)
- Latino communities (4)
- Migrant and seasonal communities (5)
- Refugee and immigrant communities (6)
- Spanish speaking families (9) including Guatemalan and indigenous Mexicans
- Work with families with ESL

Government Agencies

- Franklin County Health Department
- FVRL Library activities
- Interagency Coordinating Council
- King County Housing Authority
- Public Health in two counties (2)
- SELF collaborative
- Spokane County Library District
- Strengthening Families Washington

Schools/Educational System

- Campus-based child care and private kindergarten
- Community College Early Childhood Education Program
- Edmonds School district Early Learning initiatives
- Home school populations
- Montessori
- Pierce College ECE board member
- Private schools at all grade levels
- Public schools (6)
- School district early learning linkages group
- Tacoma Community College ECE board member
- University-based program supporting ECE program

Other Community-based Organizations

- Children's Museums
- Children's Reading Foundation
- Community-based organizations
- Direct service and community partner

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- Dungeness Valley Free Health and Wellness Clinic
- Family support service provider
- High school retrieval for those pregnant or parenting
- Homeward Bound Land Trust
- Non-profit organization for families and children
- Olympic Kiwanis
- PLOP (Pregnant and Parenting Lesbians of Portland area)
- Prevention Works of Clallam County
- United Way (2)

Other

- Director's network
- FACES
- Faith Based communities (6)
- Families in systems such as CPS and foster
- Healthy Start Task Force
- Homeless shelter for families
- King County Cradle-to-Career initiatives
- Low-income families (6)
- Mental health
- Metro area community improvement initiatives
- Military families (2)
- Parent educator
- Parent of a preschool aged child and older children
- Special needs children (2)
- Trailseekers program
- Universal behavioral health screening

Appendix K: Preliminary Recommendations (Tier 1 version)

Preliminary Recommendations for Improving the Coordination of Early Learning

Your Comments Are Needed!

The Washington State Department of Early Learning (DEL), the Office of Superintendent of Public Instruction (OSPI) and Thrive by Five Washington would like your comments and ideas on a proposal to enhance coordination in our state early learning system.

What is early learning coordination? What is the coordination project?

Many people in our state came together to create Washington's 10-year [Early Learning Plan](#). This plan sets the vision that our state's early learning system, prenatal through 3rd grade, partners with families to ensure that every child is healthy, capable and confident in school and in life. This vision calls for improving the coordination of early learning. By "coordination" we mean the process of connecting services for children and families so that the services are easy to find and use, and work together to get better results.

DEL, OSPI and Thrive by Five Washington formed the Washington Early Learning State and Local Coordination Project to get a better understanding of this challenge and seek solutions. This paper describes the draft recommendations of the project's Steering Committee for the next big step toward improving the coordination of early learning in our state. Once there is agreement on the recommendations, the project will create an implementation plan with the timing, steps and resources needed to put the improved coordination system in place.

What issues is the project trying to address?

The project's research found that families sometimes have trouble learning about and finding early learning services and care. People who work with children and families in their communities are not always aware of all the resources available in their region or at the state level, or how they work. It can be challenging for people who work on programs and policies at the state level to keep up on all the important things other state-level agencies are doing that affect children and families, and to learn the concerns and interests of people at the local level.

The project conducted individual and group interviews of 150 people around Washington and researched the best practices from other states. From this research, the project developed lists of the things that get in the way of effective coordination (barriers) and ideas for ways to do a better job (opportunities). The project then sought comments from professionals and the public on these barriers and opportunities.

Final Report and Recommendations

The barriers to early learning that the project identified were:

A. Capacity Barriers (Lack of funding, staff or resources)	B. Coordination Barriers (Lack of connections between services and programs)
1. Hard for families to access the services they need	1. Hard for families to find information to “navigate” system
2. Not enough providers for some types of services	2. Transition from early learning to elementary school is tough for families
3. Not enough people to meet professional standards in some parts of the state	3. Rural families and communities are isolated, with unique challenges
4. Too few teachers have the preparation and tools to support children’s learning in developmentally and culturally appropriate ways	4. Too few state and local leaders and providers know about programs, issues and plans outside their program “silos”
	5. Not enough two-way communication and planning between the state and local communities
	6. No measures of program, system and child outcomes that both the state and local communities are commonly using
	7. Agencies use different geographic boundaries for their initiatives

The highest priority early learning opportunities the project identified were:

Opportunities
1. Create an easy way for families to find out about and access early learning services, family support and health services
2. Promote public awareness of early learning’s importance and strengthen public will to support children’s success
3. Promote early learning partnerships that can coordinate local early learning efforts in every part of the state
4. Engage and empower the families and communities whose children are experiencing the greatest disparities to help plan services and monitor progress and results
5. Provide more opportunities to set statewide funding goals and accountability measures and allow the flexibility for communities to tailor implementation plans to meet local needs
6. Strengthen state-level coordination of early learning, family support, health and child welfare services across agencies and organizations
7. Select a handful of meaningful goals and indicators to monitor progress and results for young children and their families statewide and locally

How is early learning coordinated now?

Four entities have key roles in coordinating early learning services and programs in our state:

- **Department of Early Learning (DEL)** was created in 2006 as a cabinet-level agency to lead and coordinate the state's efforts to create world-class, developmentally and culturally appropriate early learning opportunities for all of Washington's youngest learners. The department develops, implements and coordinates early learning policy and programs.
- **The Washington Early Learning Partnership (Partnership)** is made up of DEL, OSPI and Thrive by Five Washington. The Partnership coordinates the work of the three partners in early childhood learning and development.
- **The Early Learning Advisory Council (ELAC)** is an advisory group created by state law to advise DEL on statewide issues to help build a high-quality system of early learning services and programs. Council members include state agencies, leaders in early childhood education, parents, early learning professionals, legislators, tribes and others.
- **Regional Early Learning Coalitions** have formed in the past several years in 10 regions around the state. These coalitions, each in different stages of development, work to coordinate and connect resources and programs in their local communities, share information, get information out to families about the importance of early learning, and serve as local advocates who build support for early learning among local and state decision makers.

Each of these groups is doing good work. The proposed improvements would build on what is working, and make it stronger and more connected.

What changes are being suggested?

A statewide Steering Committee of individuals from different areas of early learning has developed the following draft recommendations to help parents, families and professionals who support children (prenatal through third grade) work together more effectively.

1. **Statewide Performance Goals:** Create a handful of high-level goals to focus the collective action of those working at the state and local levels. The performance goals would help guide and inform work at the state and local level, using agreed upon metrics and data to gauge progress and work to improve program quality and results. Other states have found that setting such goals has given everyone common aims to work toward, a way to measure how successful they have been and a way to know where they need to do better. For example, North Carolina has a performance goal that 75 percent of children with special needs who receive child care subsidies will be in child care settings that have a 4- to 5-star rating in that state's Quality Rating and Improvement System.

There can be performance goals for a variety of desired improvements. For example, there can be goals for equity of access, rate of participation, service quality, percentage of improvement, and child outcomes. Performance goals also serve as a cornerstone for a plan-do-review-revise quality improvement cycle.

2. **Stakeholder Engagement:** Improve information sharing between the State and the Early Learning Regional Coalitions about what is and is not working well for families and children. Engaging stakeholders is important for setting common direction and building trust, as well as gathering information about early learning needs and the impact of proposed changes. The recommendations for stakeholder engagement include identifying what kind of engagement will bring the best results for different types of issues.
3. **State-Local Communication and Connection:** Design ongoing ways that the State, the Early Learning Regional Coalitions and the Early Learning Advisory Council communicate with each other and work together to improve opportunities and results for young children and their families.

The committee's suggestions also attempt to address the barriers and opportunities described above. They directly address the coordination barriers about:

- lack of communication and information (#B4 and B5),
- the lack of measures (#B6), and
- differing geographic boundaries (#B7).

The suggestions address the opportunities related to:

- promoting public awareness (#2),
- promoting partnerships (#3),
- engaging families (#4),
- setting goals (#5 and #7), and
- strengthening state-level coordination (#6).

What are the suggested changes in structures, functions and relationships?

Washington Early Learning Partnership: Invite the Department of Health (DOH) and the Department of Social and Health Services (DSHS) to join with DEL, OSPI, and Thrive by Five Washington as members of the Early Learning Partnership.

ELAC: Expand this advisory council to include representatives from all 10 Regional Early Learning Coalitions, and increase the number of parents and representatives from K-12 education. These additions will increase the size of the Council from 23 to 40 members. The Council will consider input from the regional coalitions and from people interested in early learning (stakeholders) around the state, and help to build understanding of state and regional early learning needs. The Council will create an annual work plan to focus on the highest priority early learning strategies.

Regional Early Learning Coalitions: The coalitions will engage their local communities and stakeholders in setting early learning priorities in their regions. They will also provide input to ELAC and the Partnership about regional needs and interests. Coalitions will continue to decide on their own membership. Coalitions will be encouraged to include members who can represent the diverse interests of the region, such as leaders from early learning programs, opinion leaders from

government and business, parents, professionals, volunteers and others who together represent the region's diversity and geographic areas.

How will coordination be affected by these recommendations?

The Steering Committee believes the recommendations will strengthen coordination in the following ways. The statewide performance goals will help everyone who works with or on behalf of young children to focus on the highest priority actions and to make sure those actions take place. The stakeholder engagement recommendations will help make sure that stakeholder input informs policies and programs.

By inviting the Department of Health (DOH) and the Department of Social and Health Services (DSHS) to join the Washington Early Learning Partnership, the partners will be better able to work together across their different programs to serve children and families.

ELAC will become a place where state and local representatives can discuss the needs of children and families, the need for new or expanded programs, ideas for policy or funding initiatives, and ways to better serve all children in Washington. By adding representatives from each of the 10 Regional Coalitions, ELAC will serve as a bridge between local communities and state-level agencies. Increasing the number of parents and K-12 representatives will ensure that those important voices are engaged in ELAC's discussions.

The Regional Coalitions will improve connections in their communities and regions. They will also inform state-level agencies about regional needs and interests, and offer advice about state policies and decisions. The state agencies, ELAC and the Regional Coalitions will work together to raise public awareness and support for early learning in Washington.

For additional information, please go to the Project Webpage at www.del.wa.gov/partnerships/elac/state-local.aspx.

Now that you have read this document, please go to the online survey:

<https://www.surveymonkey.com/s/EarlyLearningSLCProject>

Appendix L: Preliminary Recommendations (Tier 2 version)

Preliminary Recommendations for Improving the Coordination of Early Learning

Your Comments Are Needed!

The Washington State Department of Early Learning (DEL), the Office of Superintendent of Public Instruction (OSPI) and Thrive by Five Washington would like your comments and ideas on a proposal to enhance coordination in our state early learning system.

What is early learning coordination? What is the coordination project?

Many people in our state came together to create Washington's 10-year [Early Learning Plan](#). This plan sets the vision that our state's early learning system, prenatal through 3rd grade, partners with families to ensure that every child is healthy, capable and confident in school and in life. This vision calls for improving the coordination of early learning. By "coordination" we mean the process of connecting services for children and families so that the services are easy to find and use, and work together to get better results.

DEL, OSPI and Thrive by Five Washington formed the Washington Early Learning State and Local Coordination Project to get a better understanding of this challenge and seek solutions. This paper describes the draft recommendations of the project's Steering Committee for the next big step toward improving the coordination of early learning in our state. Once there is agreement on the recommendations, the project will create an implementation plan with the timing, steps and resources needed to put the improved coordination system in place.

What issues is the project trying to address?

The project's research found that families sometimes have trouble learning about and finding early learning services and care. People who work with children and families in their communities are not always aware of all the resources available in their region or at the state level, or how they work. It can be challenging for people who work on programs and policies at the state level to keep up on all the important things other state-level agencies are doing that affect children and families, and to learn the concerns and interests of people at the local level.

The project conducted individual and group interviews of 150 people around Washington and researched the best practices from other states. From this research, the project developed lists of the things that get in the way of effective coordination (barriers) and ideas for ways to do a better job (opportunities). The project then sought comments from professionals and the public on these barriers and opportunities.

Final Report and Recommendations

The barriers to early learning that the project identified were:

C. Capacity Barriers (Lack of funding, staff or resources)	D. Coordination Barriers (Lack of connections between services and programs)
5. Hard for families to access the services they need	8. Hard for families to find information to “navigate” system
6. Not enough providers for some types of services	9. Transition from early learning to elementary school is tough for families
7. Not enough people to meet professional standards in some parts of the state	10. Rural families and communities are isolated, with unique challenges
8. Too few teachers have the preparation and tools to support children’s learning in developmentally and culturally appropriate ways	11. Too few state and local leaders and providers know about programs, issues and plans outside their program “silos”
	12. Not enough two-way communication and planning between the state and local communities
	13. No measures of program, system and child outcomes that both the state and local communities are commonly using
	14. Agencies use different geographic boundaries for their initiatives

The highest priority early learning opportunities the project identified were:

Opportunities
8. Create an easy way for families to find out about and access early learning services, family support and health services
9. Promote public awareness of early learning’s importance and strengthen public will to support children’s success
10. Promote early learning partnerships that can coordinate local early learning efforts in every part of the state
11. Engage and empower the families and communities whose children are experiencing the greatest disparities to help plan services and monitor progress and results
12. Provide more opportunities to set statewide funding goals and accountability measures and allow the flexibility for communities to tailor implementation plans to meet local needs
13. Strengthen state-level coordination of early learning, family support, health and child welfare services across agencies and organizations
14. Select a handful of meaningful goals and indicators to monitor progress and results for young children and their families statewide and locally

How is early learning coordinated now?

Four entities that have key roles in coordinating early learning services and programs in our state are:

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- **Washington Early Learning Partnership (Partnership)** is made up of DEL, OSPI and Thrive by Five Washington. The Partnership coordinates the work of the three partners in early childhood learning and development.
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- **Regional Early Learning Coalitions** have formed in the past several years in 10 regions around the state. These coalitions, each in different stages of development, work to coordinate and connect resources and programs in their local communities, share information, get information out to families about the importance of early learning, and serve as local advocates who build support for early learning among local and state decision makers.

Each of these groups is doing good work. The proposed improvements would build on what is working, and make it stronger and more connected.

What changes are being suggested?

A statewide Steering Committee of individuals from different areas of early learning has developed the following draft recommendations to help parents, families and professionals who support children (prenatal through third grade) work together more effectively.

4. **Statewide Performance Goals:** Create a handful of high-level goals to strengthen the collective action of those working at the state and local levels. The performance goals would help guide and inform work at the state and local level, using agreed upon metrics and data to gauge progress and work to improve program quality and results. Other states have found that setting such goals has given everyone common aims to work toward, a way to measure how successful they have been and a way to know where they need to do better. For example, North Carolina has a performance goal that 75 percent of children with special needs who receive child care subsidies will be in child care settings that have a 4- to 5-star rating in that state's Quality Rating and Improvement System.

There can be performance goals for a variety of desired improvements. For example, there can be goals for equity of access, rate of participation, service quality, percentage of improvement, and child outcomes. Performance goals also serve as a cornerstone for a plan-do-review-revise quality improvement cycle.

5. **Stakeholder Engagement:** Improve information sharing between the State and the Early Learning Regional Coalitions about what is and is not working well for families and children. Engaging stakeholders is important for setting common direction and building trust, as well as gathering information about early learning needs and the impact of proposed changes. The recommendations for stakeholder engagement include identifying what kind of engagement will bring the best results for different types of issues.
6. **State-Local Communication and Connection:** Design ongoing ways that the State, the Early Learning Regional Coalitions and the Early Learning Advisory Council communicate with each other and work together to improve opportunities and results for young children and their families.

The committee's suggestions also attempt to address the barriers and opportunities described above. They directly address the coordination barriers about:

- lack of communication and information (#B4 and B5),
- the lack of measures (#B6), and
- differing geographic boundaries (#B7).

The suggestions address the opportunities related to:

- promoting public awareness (#2),
- promoting partnerships (#3),
- engaging families (#4),
- setting goals (#5 and #7), and
- strengthening state-level coordination (#6).

What are the suggested changes in structures, functions and relationships?

The charts on the next two pages describe the proposed changes to the coordination groups and their membership, relationships and functions.

Final Report and Recommendations
State and Local Early Learning Coordination Structure and Functions
Project Steering Committee Recommendations for Public Comment

One of the objectives of the project is to build upon, and strengthen the good work that DEL and others are doing to create a world-class early learning system in Washington state. Designing the state and local coordination system is similar to a jigsaw puzzle in that many of the individual decisions impact how well the system will work as a whole. For example, if it were recommended that ELAC not play a role in state to regional coordination, we would then need to explore another way to address that function. The following chart includes the key coordination structures designed to improve state agency-state agency, state-regional and regional–local coordination, with summary information about each structure.

The functions chart on the following page summarizes the key roles of each entity in each of six essential early learning system functions. The recommendations include functions that are already being performed.

	State Agency-State Agency Coordination	State-Regional Coordination	Regional Coordination
	WA Early Learning Partnership (WELP)	Early Learning Advisory Council (ELAC)	Early Learning Regional Coalitions
Recommended Structure	Interagency partnership of state agencies that fund or set policy for early learning. (No change to agencies' decision-making authority.) Agencies or the Partnership may request ELAC advice.	Council of non-governmental and state agency representatives that provides advice and recommendations to DEL.	10 Early Learning Regional Coalitions using current Coalition boundaries
Recommended Membership	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • <u>Five state-level agencies</u> that fund and/or set early learning policy: DEL, DOH, DSHS, OSPI and Thrive. Invite DOH and DSHS to join current Partnership group. • <u>Agency leaders and directors</u> as appropriate for the work 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • <u>Membership</u>: 40 members (add 10 regional coalitions, more parents, more K-12 representation and connections to state wide associations and networks) • <u>Two co-chairs</u>: one state agency member and one non-governmental member to be elected by the Council for a two-year term • <u>Executive Committee</u> of the two co-chairs and two to three Council members (preferably chairs of ELAC working committees) • <u>Working Committees</u> will be established to carry out the ELAC Work Plan • <u>Designated liaisons</u> to other ongoing committees, such as the Interagency Coordinating Committee (list to be identified in the ELAC workplan). 	<p><u>Membership</u>: To be determined by each Coalition, using guidance to encourage a mix of diverse individuals who, together, can represent the region:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Leaders and representatives from each early learning field/sub-system and constituency (e.g., communities of color, business) who can make and influence decisions • Champions and opinion leaders from government, education, business, philanthropy and the media • Professionals and volunteers who represent regional geographic, ethnic and racial diversity • People who provide or have access to needed skills and capacities
Recommended Guiding Agreements	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Updated Memorandum of Understanding to include additional state agencies • Early Learning Plan • Annual priorities • Clear agreements about lead agency and partner roles on each issue 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • ELAC Charter • Member Job Description and roles with shared commitments • Early Learning Plan • ELAC work plan • Committee Charters (purposes, timeline, etc.) 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Governance document with purposes and minimum operating structure • Decision-making and communication processes • Clear regional plan and goals

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<p>Recommended Coordination Relationships</p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Continue to strengthen the connection between state agency leaders for each early learning sub-system • Work together to increase alignment, and reduce “silos” of state programs • Draw on advice from ELAC and experience of regional representatives 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Provide recommendations for state goals, strategies and policies • Serve as a forum for regional/state system-building discussions • Provide avenue for state leaders and Council members to understand regional issues, and demographic and economic shifts • Provide avenue for regional leaders and Council members to understand state agency aims and issues 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Engage local stakeholders, communities and families • Provide a voice for regional interests and concerns, offering comments on state goals, strategies and policies • Participate in ELAC (one representative from each coalition)
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Recommended State, ELAC and Regional Roles in the Early Learning System Functions

Functions	State Level Agencies	ELAC	Regional Coalitions
<p>Crosscutting Function:</p> <p>Build Relationships; Consider Stakeholder input</p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Create/maintain collaborative working relationships across sectors and agencies • Gather and consider advice/input from ELAC and stakeholders to inform decisions • Gather and consider statewide and regional/ local data and needs to inform decisions about how to boost results for children. Communicate decisions and reasons for decisions 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Advise on stakeholder engagement processes • Consider stakeholder input in developing recommendations and giving advice to DEL • Communicate state-level information, priorities and issues back to communities and constituencies • Serve as a forum to ensure mutual understanding of state and regional needs, emerging issues, innovations and system building 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Build relationships with communities of color and low-income communities so that the interests of all children are well-represented • Involve stakeholders from each of the early learning fields • Engage communities & stakeholders in setting regional priorities • Bring community voice grounded in understanding of regional experience and demographic/economic shifts to providing advice on state decisions
1. Set Standards, Goals and Outcomes	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Review data, proven and promising practices, and state/ regional successes and gaps • Set and revise performance goals, outcomes and accountability measures in consultation with ELAC 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Consider data, proven and promising practices, and state/regional successes and gaps in development of recommendations • Make recommendations for key standards, performance goals and outcomes 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Gather, analyze and share successes and experience, regional gaps and needs, and proven and promising practices • Set regional goals and outcomes
2. Choose Strategies and Priorities	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Set annual priorities in consultation with ELAC • Determine state funded services/ programs • Establish guidelines for tailoring programs to meet local needs, as appropriate 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Promote mutual understanding of state and regional issues, needs and opportunities • Advise /make recommendations on key issues, initiatives and system building 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Set regional priorities and Action Agenda; tailor programs to meet local needs • Suggest innovations, "promising approaches" and examples of solutions to streamline/ integrate services for state consideration
3. Ensure Funding and Policy Support	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Secure state, federal and private funds to implement statewide early learning strategies • Implement policy/funding support for expansion/ enhancement of high-quality supports & services that can boost results for children 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Advise and make recommendations on key issues, initiatives and system building 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Identify & share "enhancements" needed to meet state and regional outcomes • Analyze system/ service funding; identify gaps / efficiencies • Secure and maximize state/ local government and private funds to advance regional strategies
4. Implement and Expand Services and Programs	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Analyze and understand the needs and capacity of state and regional service delivery systems • Remove barriers to quality, effectiveness, efficiency and maximum child outcomes • Decide on phasing, targets and infrastructure to support scaling of systems and services 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Advise and make recommendations on key issues, initiatives and system building • Raise and/or advise on emerging issues 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Engage local/regional stakeholders to identify obstacles/ solutions to promote alignment, efficiency and, expansion of effective, high-quality services • Analyze and share needs with regional and state partners • Advance state priorities. Select and implement regional services, supports and system building
5. Build Public Understanding and Public Will	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Communicate state goals, outcomes and "what it will take" to get there to regional coalitions and to advocates • Educate the public and cultivate champions using data to show value 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Champion early learning, state goals and outcomes, and "what it will take" to get there in member spheres of influence 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Cultivate diverse champions, use data to show value, communicate regional goals and "what it will take" to get there • Work with partners and advocates to develop and implement regional and local public education

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Functions	State Level Agencies	ELAC	Regional Coalitions
<p>6. Be Accountable for Achieving Outcomes</p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Set framework for state/regional outcomes and quality improvement processes that illuminates and addresses inequities • Manage data systems and report progress • Provide technical assistance for professionals and partners • Monitor grantees; manage and account for funds 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Advise on framework for state/regional outcomes • Advise and make recommendations on key issues, initiatives and system building 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Implement regional/local quality improvement processes and reporting • Engage local/regional stakeholders in reviewing services and programs, and identifying refinements to improve outcomes and reduce inequities • Manage and account for funds and report regional results

How will coordination be affected by these recommendations?

The Steering Committee believes the recommendations will strengthen coordination in the following ways. The statewide performance goals will help everyone who works with or on behalf of young children to focus on the highest priority actions and to make sure those actions take place. The stakeholder engagement recommendations will help make sure that stakeholder input informs policies and programs.

By inviting the Department of Health (DOH) and the Department of Social and Health Services (DSHS) to join the Washington Early Learning Partnership, the partners will be better able to work together across their different programs to serve children and families.

ELAC will become a place where state and local representatives can discuss the needs of children and families, the need for new or expanded programs, ideas for policy or funding initiatives, and ways to better serve all children in Washington. By adding representatives from each of the 10 Regional Coalitions, ELAC will serve as a bridge between local communities and state-level agencies. Increasing the number of parents and K-12 representatives will ensure that those important voices are engaged in ELAC's discussions.

The Regional Coalitions will improve connections in their communities and regions. They will also inform state-level agencies about regional needs and interests, and offer advice about state policies and decisions. The state agencies, ELAC and the Regional Coalitions will work together to raise public awareness and support for early learning in Washington.

What is an example of how this would work?

Here is how something as important as setting statewide performance goals could work using the proposed approach:

1. **Set the Purpose, Process and Timeline:** DEL, with advice from ELAC, would set the purpose, process and timeline for creating early learning performance goals.
2. **Create a Workgroup to Recommend Performance Goals:** An ELAC workgroup made up of ELAC members, experts in the field, representatives from DEL and other state agencies, and people from local communities would be established to guide the process. The workgroup would look at our state's 10-Year *Early Learning Plan* and consider the improvements that could make the biggest differences for children and families. They would then develop a list of potential performance goals, suggest how each goal could be measured, and how the goals could be used to continuously improve program quality, access to services and results for children.
3. **Conduct Stakeholder Engagement:** The next step would be stakeholder engagement to ask communities and families across the state which of the potential goals they think are the most important.

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4. **Make Recommendations:** The workgroup would use stakeholders' ideas and comments to develop final recommendations for early learning performance goals to DEL and possibly other implementing partners. The workgroup would ask the full Early Learning Advisory Council to confirm the recommendations. ELAC would then forward the recommendations for decision.
5. **Make Decisions and Implement:** DEL, and possibly others involved in implementation (if any), would make the final decision and then implement the performance goals and associated quality improvement processes. As the process is implemented, DEL would stay in regular communication with ELAC so that everyone across the early learning system knows what is happening and how they can work together to improve early learning services and access for children and families.

For additional information, please go to the Project Webpage at www.del.wa.gov/partnerships/elac/state-local.aspx.

Now that you have read this document, please go to the online survey:

<https://www.surveymonkey.com/s/EarlyLearningSLCProject>

Appendix M: Round 2 Engagement Survey: Summary of Results

Washington Early Learning State and Local Coordination Project Round 2 Outreach Survey (11/20/12 – 12/21/12) Summary Analysis

Between November 20 and December 21, 2012, the **Early Learning State and Local Coordination Project** conducted an online survey about the project Steering Committee’s preliminary recommendations for improving state and local coordination. The agencies sponsoring the project encouraged everyone reviewing the preliminary recommendations to offer their own comments using an online survey form. There were two options for documents to review: Tier 1, a less detailed overview of the preliminary recommendations, and Tier 2, which included more details about the recommendations. The first question in the online survey asked which version the respondent reviewed, and sent the person to the appropriate set of questions.

This document summarizes the responses to the online survey and the characteristics of those who commented. The Steering Committee will use the comments to revise and finalize the recommendations for ways all parts of the early learning system in Washington can work together more effectively.

What Respondents Said

In general, a strong majority of both Tier 1 and Tier 2 respondents said they believe the proposed changes would be effective in improving state-local coordination of early learning. They were less confident that the changes would improve early learning services for children and families or would help the respondents in their own early learning work. However, the preliminary recommendations did not directly discuss how improvements in coordination could help improve services, so it was up to readers to make that connection.

The following are the major themes that emerged from the survey respondents’ comments.

- **Highest ratings.** Average ratings of the specific recommendations were the highest for: having the Early Learning Advisory Council (ELAC) adopt a workplan (3.24 average rating on a 1 to 4 scale where 4 is “very effective”); increasing stakeholder engagement (3.21 average rating); and adopting a handful of statewide performance goals (3.20 average rating).
- Respondents commented that they especially liked: expanding the Washington Early Learning Partnership (WELP) to include the Department of Health (DOH) and Department of Social and Health Services (DSHS); expanding ELAC to include representatives of the Regional Coalitions and more parents; the opportunities for two-way communication between the state and regional/local groups; and more clearly defining roles.
- **WELP membership.** Respondents suggested adding representatives of other state agencies and one federal agency to the Washington Early Learning Partnership. These were: the Department of Community, Trade and Economic Development (CTED), the Department of the Blind, and the regional Office of Head Start.
- **ELAC membership and meetings.** Respondents made a number of suggestions for stakeholder representatives to add to ELAC and/or the Regional Coalitions. These were: early intervention/special education; higher education; health care providers (medical home) and mental health providers; Tribes; more parents; more child care providers; and local business. There were also suggestions that ELAC coordinate with the State Interagency Coordinating Council (SICC) and county ICCs, the Washington Chapter of the American Academy of Pediatrics, and school districts.

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- There were suggestions that ELAC make its meetings more accessible by varying the meeting locations across the state and/or using technology, such as K-20 webinars at Educational Service District or Child Care Aware offices.
- **Concerns with concepts.** Some respondents expressed concerns about the concepts in the recommendations. The most frequently mentioned were as follows. The recommendations seem top-down and agency-driven rather than consumer driven. There is too much focus on structure and bureaucracy and not enough on children and families. Decision processes and accountability are vague.
- **Concerns with implementation.** Some respondents expressed concerns about implementation of the recommendations. The most frequently mentioned were as follows. The state agencies involved will need a commitment from the top, and the representatives on the Early Learning Partnership will need to have decision-making authority in their agencies. The number of members proposed for ELAC (40) is unwieldy. There will need to be a good orientation process for the parent and child care representatives on ELAC, and assistance in the form of travel reimbursements, child care, etc. The Regional Coalitions are at different stages of development. Coalitions will need financial and staffing support to carry out their roles.
- **Cultural competence.** Several respondents urged that all aspects of the system be culturally competent and that representatives of communities of color be consulted.
- **Communication.** There were suggestions about increasing and improving communication. These included: increasing interagency communication and communication about policies; adopting a formal two-way communication mechanism; and utilizing technology to facilitate frequent communication. It was suggested that ELAC send communications similar to Thrive by Five's emails to the coalitions.
- **Public awareness.** Several respondents suggested more effort to increase public awareness about the importance of early learning and what quality care looks like. A couple of respondents suggested adding business and community representatives at the regional and state levels as a way to build public will.
- **Other concerns.** Several respondents expressed concerns about other facets of the existing early learning system. These included: the need to reduce duplicative paperwork; the current policies for subsidy and licensing; the requirements of the MERIT and Early Achievers programs; the availability agency staff to answer questions; and the need for funding for training and for infant mental health.

Who Responded

There were a total of 223 responses to the survey: 188 from individuals and 35 from a group discussion.

Respondents spanned the state, with the largest number from the South Sound and King County regions.

Respondents who identified their primary roles related to early learning were distributed among a range of categories.

The top three roles were "licensed child care," "preschool," and "advocate or volunteer." Those who offered their affiliation listed a wide range of organizations.

Sixty (60) respondents who provided their race/ethnicity self-identified as follows:

48 Caucasian/white, 6 Hispanic, 1 Asian American and Pacific Islander, 2

Native American, 1 African American, and 2 multi-racial. In addition, the group discussion included 32 Caucasian, 1

Native American, 1 Asian American and 1 African American participant. Of the 80 respondents who answered a

question about their involvement with any particular communities or groups, a diverse range of perspectives were

listed: geographic affiliations, early learning coalitions and groups, child care and preschool, culturally diverse

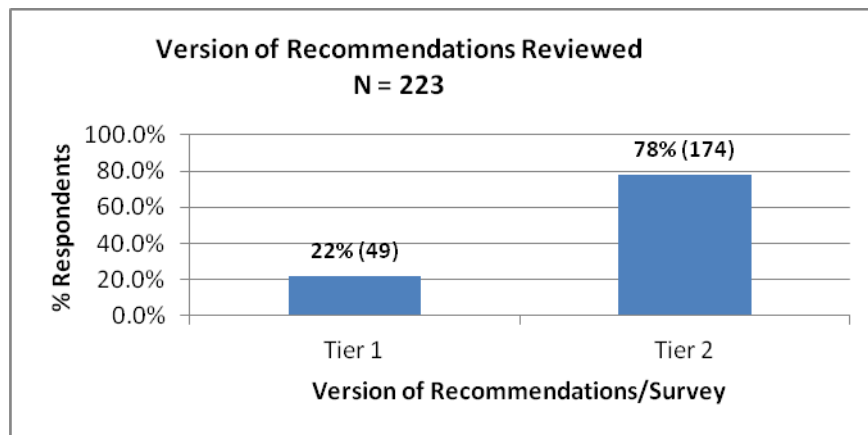
organizations, government agencies, educational organizations and schools, and community-based groups.

**Washington Early Learning State and Local Coordination Project
Round 2 Outreach Survey (11/20/12 – 12/21/12)
Summary of Results**

Below is first a summary of what the survey respondents said in response to the questions, followed by a summary of who responded.

III. What Respondents Said

The majority (139) of the 188 individual respondents reviewed the Tier 2 document. In addition, the group who provided a response also reviewed Tier 2. Because the 35 group members gave individual responses to the ratings questions, this summary counts them with the individual respondents in the tallies for Tier 2, for a total of 174 Tier 2 respondents.

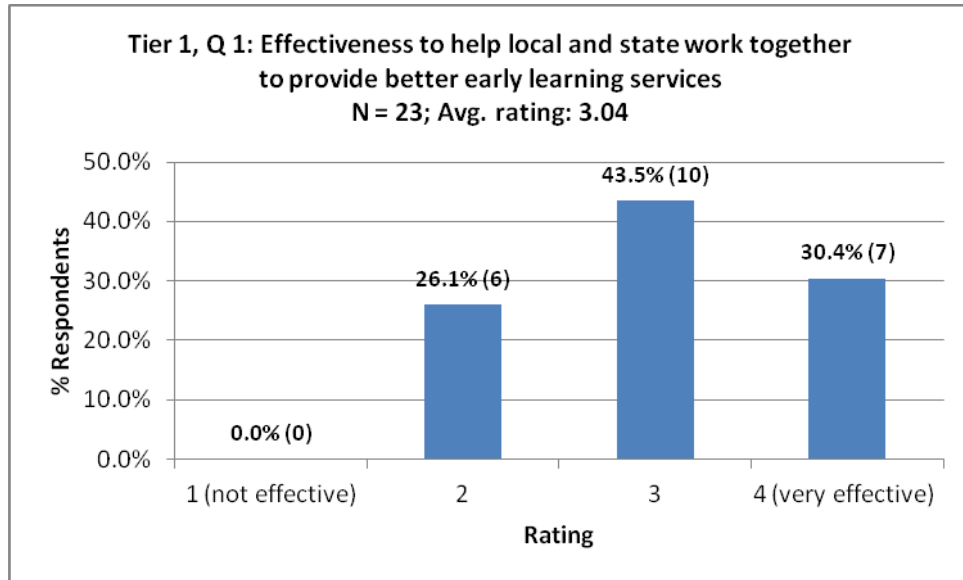


TIER 1 RESPONSES (less detailed version of preliminary recommendations)

A total of 49 respondents (22%) said they read the less detailed (Tier 1) version of the Preliminary Recommendations and responded to the corresponding survey.

Tier 1, Question 1. How effective do you think the changes will be in helping local communities and state agencies work together to provide better early learning services?

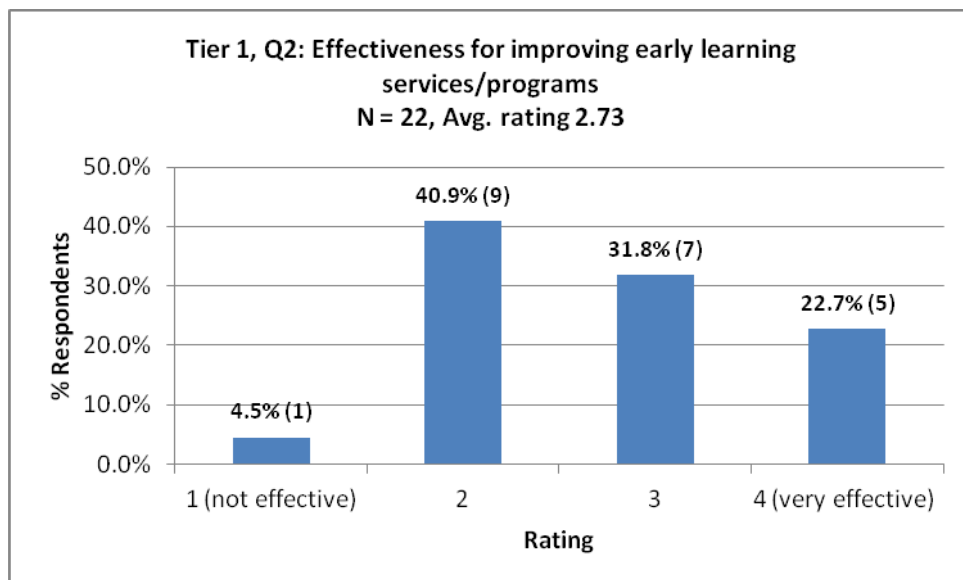
Total responses: 23 (26 skipped the question). Nearly 74 percent of respondents gave the changes a rating of 3 or 4 in effectiveness (out of 4); none rated them 1 (not effective). The ratings were as follows:



Comments to Question 1 (Total responses: 10): There were three positive comments about involving the Department of Health (DOH) and Department of Social and Health Services (DSHS) (2 respondents), and building on the existing framework. Concerns were expressed about the emphasis on structure (plan focuses too much on bureaucracy and not enough on communities, parents and providers— 2 respondents); that it does not seem different from what we have now (1 respondent); other groups/sectors who need to be involved (in-home and kinship care providers, communities who cannot come to ELAC meetings in Olympia – 4 respondents); and about requirements for educators and children (education requirements for MERIT; plan sounds too much like school standards – 3 respondents).

Tier 1, Question 2. How effective do you think the changes will be in improving early learning services and programs for children and families?

Total responses: 22 (26 skipped the question). Respondents were less certain that the changes would improve services for children and families, with 54.5 percent giving a 3 or 4 rating and 45.5 percent giving a 1 or 2 rating.



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Comments to Question 2 (Total responses: 13): Positive comments were that it will be beneficial to add DOH and DSHS (3 respondents); that better coordination will help providers in making referrals and recommendations to parents (2 respondents), and that this seems like a strong start (1 respondent). Respondents suggested adding or emphasizing parent participation, even as a requirement for participating in an early learning program (2 respondents); involving K-3 teachers more and doing more bridging (1 respondent); direct service, which make the most difference in child outcomes (1 respondent); and the need to address language and cultural barriers (1 respondent). Respondents expressed concern that it is not clear how things will be improved (1 respondent); some wording sounds like the high stakes testing of K-12 (1 respondent); the lack of resources for children born into poverty (1 respondent); and that more funding needs to go to centers and family homes to provide parents with choices (1 respondent).

Tier 1, Question 3. Are there other changes of improvements to enhance coordination within the early learning system that you want to see happen? If so, what are they?

Total responses: 17 (32 skipped the question). Respondents provided the following suggestions:

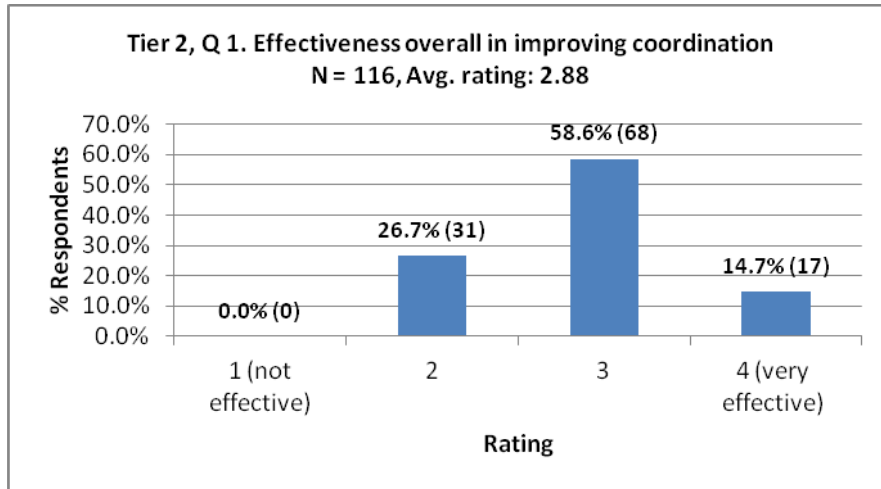
- **Provide more information for parents and involve them more** (6 respondents): Online database for families; train staff at DSHS Community Services offices so they can refer families; survey parents on a regular basis; support quarterly information fairs for families in each region; offer/require training on easy, no-cost learning activities to do at home.
- **Increase communication and outreach** (3 respondents): Improve outreach and interagency cooperation; do better communication and coordination with private programs; survey K-3 teachers.
- **Suggested policy changes** (3 respondents): Fund centers and family home care at 75% of normal and customary to attract quality providers; change policies for IFSP to be based on the child's ongoing needs; emphasize social-emotional development for Early Achievers, not academics.
- **Partner with health care providers and organizations** (2 respondents): Use pediatricians to distribute early learning information to parents; add a medical agency such as Family Medical Center to the Early Learning Partnership.
- **Provide more information for early learning professionals** (2 respondents): Give all providers access to ECEAP and Head Start materials; provide websites on early learning strategies with materials providers can print and use in classroom.
- **Increase awareness** (2 respondents): Awareness—what is Thrive by 5?; make community aware of the connection between poverty and early learning outcomes.
- **Additional stakeholder groups to involve in ELAC and/or coalitions** (2 respondents): Include families whose children receive ESIT and special education; include the training community and community colleges.
- **Emphasize cultural competence** (2 respondents): Train teachers in culturally appropriate teaching; improve communication with Asian American and Pacific Islander communities.
- **Structure and funding** (2 respondents): With regional coalitions working, can eliminate ELAC; make funds available for local efforts.
- **Good list** of what needs to be done (1 respondent).

TIER 2 RESPONSES (more detailed version of preliminary recommendations)

A total of 174 respondents (78%) said they read the more detailed (Tier 2) version of the Preliminary Recommendations and responded to the corresponding survey.

Tier 2, Question 1. Overall, how effective do you think the proposed changes will be in improving the coordination of early learning services and programs?

Total responses: 116 (58 skipped the question). The majority of respondents (73%) gave ratings of 3 or 4.



Comments to Question 1 (Total responses: 60): Respondents commented about things they liked, did not like and were concerned about, and suggested a number of additions or enhancements, as described below.

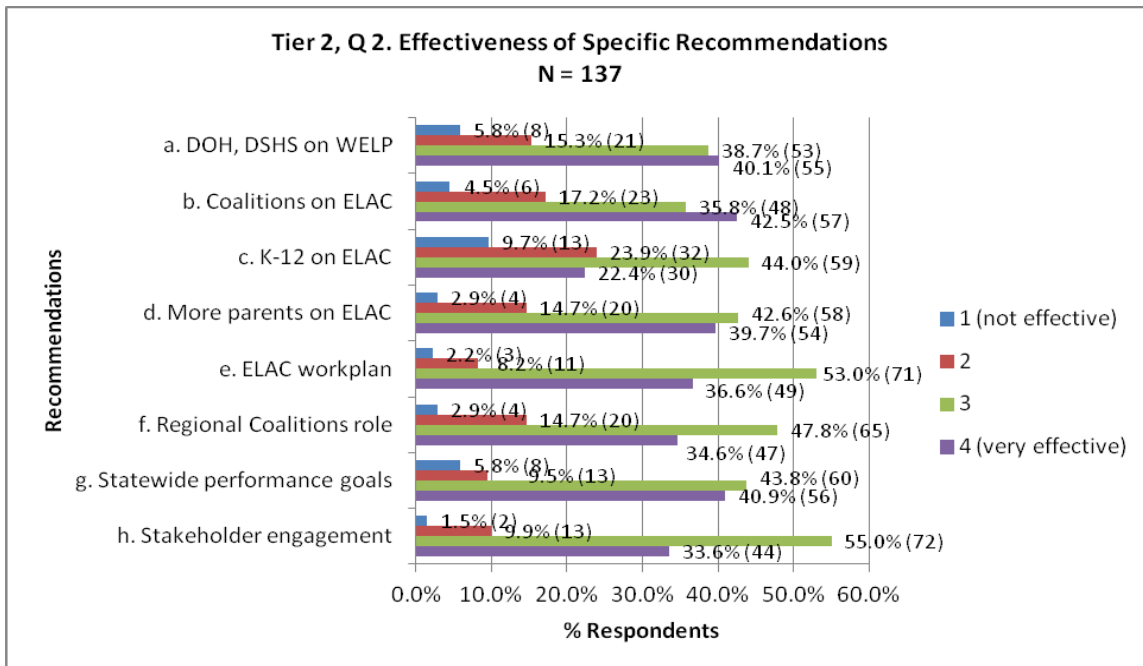
- Like** (17 respondents): Involving DOH and DSHS (5 respondents); generally a good plan (4); expanding ELAC’s membership to add Coalitions and a greater diversity of perspectives (4); giving stronger voice to those on the ground and more accurate information to the state from local communities to adjust priorities (2); defines roles and improves communication; could be a good model for coordination with local stakeholders; effective if adjusted over time as need arises.
- Don’t like** (7 respondents): Too much focus on the system with families, programs and schools need funding; document is cumbersome and confusing; does not advance the vision of healthy children ready to learn; instead of this plan, find out from Family Advocates, Family Support Specialists and Family Resource Coordinators what families need; too much “jumping through hoops” and not enough action; too much advisory complexity and cost; does not address the inadequate supply of qualified early learning professionals; what does this plan look like on a daily basis for the child/family/teacher?
- Structure** (19 respondents): Regional coalitions are at different stages of development, may not be working in same direction or have tools to implement (3 respondents); the emphasis needs to be at the local level, connecting schools and neighborhoods to providers and families, and increasing communication between regional and local coalitions (2); top-down model, so adding more parents will not have an impact (2); agencies will still be in silos (2); what is DEL expected to do with ELAC’s recommendations? What if there the recommendations are not aligned with DEL’s vision? (2); invite participation of specific DSHS programs rather than whole agency; state agencies involved will need commitment from the top; decision processes and accountability are vague; level of responsiveness will need to be high enough to keep people involved; success depends on funding and accountability; the systems are already set up, just need good flow and equity of communication; 40 members for ELAC is unwieldy; what incentives do parents have to participate?; school districts are a more capable vehicle than regional coalitions; will local organizations not recognized by DEL be considered local or regional coalitions?; funding is needed at the local level to make the changes; how is this related to the community momentum work at Thrive? System looks very agency-driven rather than consumer driven, despite including more parents, child care providers and other community representatives (group of 35)
- Missing stakeholders** (10 respondents): Include State Interagency Coordinating Council (SICC) and county Interagency Coordinating Councils and/or Part C providers so children with delays and disabilities are included, ELAC should communicate with SICC (3 respondents); include pediatricians/medical homes in structure, with WA Chapter of American Academy of Pediatrics on ELAC (2); higher education needs a seat at the table; expanded ELAC needs to include the DEL Tribal Liaison and tribal representatives; include more community, parent, provider and FFN voices; involve school districts; regional Office of Head Start should be included

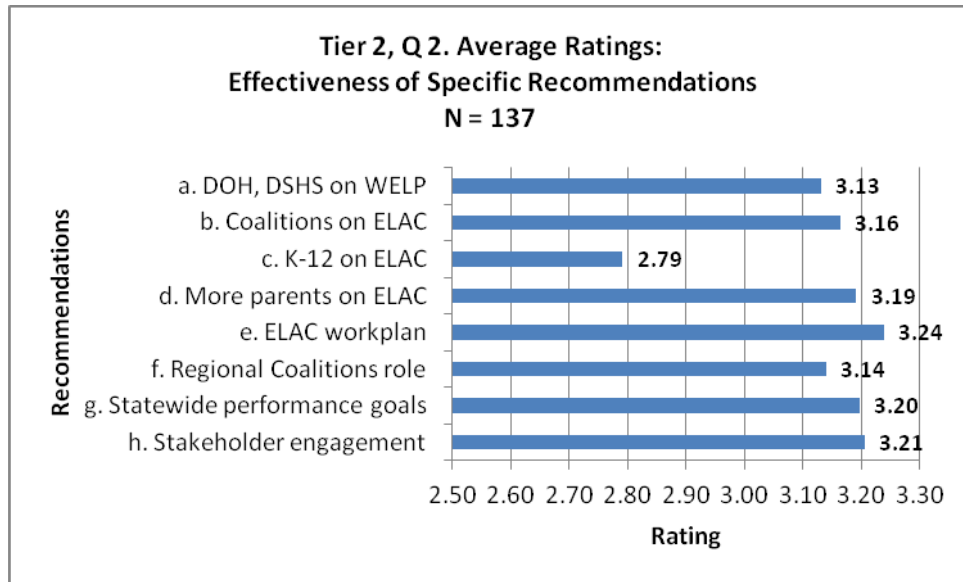
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- **Cultural competency and inclusion** (4 respondents): Plan needs to address language and cultural barriers; statewide performance goals and stakeholder engagement need to be culturally competent; include Asian American and Pacific Islander communities; do the 10 regional coalitions include Tribes or does there need to be an 11th coalition?
- **Communication** (3 respondents): Need a way to get information from ELAC and coalitions to families and providers; communication streams need to provide enough time for review and comment; make sure everyone understands the changes.
- **Coordination** (2 respondents): Need to reduce duplicative paperwork of agencies and programs so staff can serve children and families
- **Focus on whole child** (2 respondents): Emphasis should not be just on curriculum but also on health, relationships, emotional intelligence
- **Stakeholder engagement** (1 respondent): Need strong grassroots participation, including families and providers not usually involved.
- **Providers** (1 respondent): Address stresses place on licensed providers and facilities by current CPS/DLR/DEL system.
- **Public will** (1 respondent): Involve community and business leaders at the state level to support public understanding and ensure funding and policy support
- **Implementation** (1 respondent): It takes time to build relationships; the timeline proposed may be too fast.

Tier 2, Question 2. How effective do you think each of the specific recommendations will be in strengthening the state and local coordination and improving results for children?

Total responses: 137 (37 skipped the question). Overall, the recommendations were well-received. Three recommendations received a “very effective” rating from more than 40 percent of respondents: Adding Regional Coalition members to ELAC (42.5% gave a 4 rating); adopting a handful of statewide performance goals (40.9%); and inviting DOH and DSHS to join the Washington Early Learning Partnership (40.1%). The other recommendations all received a 3 rating from more than 40 percent of respondents. Averaging the ratings, the top three recommendations were: Using an annual workplan for ELAC (3.24 average); identifying types of stakeholder engagement (3.21 average); and adopting a handful of statewide performance goals (3.20 average).





Comments to Question 2 (Total responses: 47):

General comments:

- **Concerns about the concept** (5 respondents): Too much structure and monitoring; we need the time and money to do outreach and serve families; too much information gathering and not enough action; address the needs of ALL families; needs a family-focused perspective.
- **Concerns about implementation** (4 respondents): Need to improve the current lack of accessibility of staff at DEL for providers and parents; record is not good that the state listens to feedback; effectiveness depends on whether state agencies really see themselves as partners; people taking leadership roles need to understand what is developmentally appropriate for children at each age
- **Cultural competence** (1 respondent): Recognize diverse needs; include API stakeholders.
- **Coordination** (1 respondent): Continue gathering information from all the institutions and groups involved in early learning.
- **Holistic approach** (1 respondent): Health, first relationships and parent support are equally important parts of the process as are curriculum and teacher training.
- **Public awareness** (1 respondent): More public awareness is needed as to what quality care looks like and importance of early learning.

a. DOH, DSHS on WELP:

(Comments made here are included below with comments to Question 3.)

b. – e. Expanding ELAC membership, and adding an ELAC workplan:

(Comments made here are included below with comments to Question 4.)

f. Regional Coalitions role:

(Comments made here are included below with comments to Question 5.)

g. Performance goals:

- **Don't like** (2 respondents): Not in the interest of better access to services; regulations/ratings already have a system.
- **Consistency** (1 respondent): Use Teaching Strategies Gold since WAKids, ECAAP, some Head Starts all use it.
- **Accountability** (1 respondent): Not clear who will hold folks accountable.

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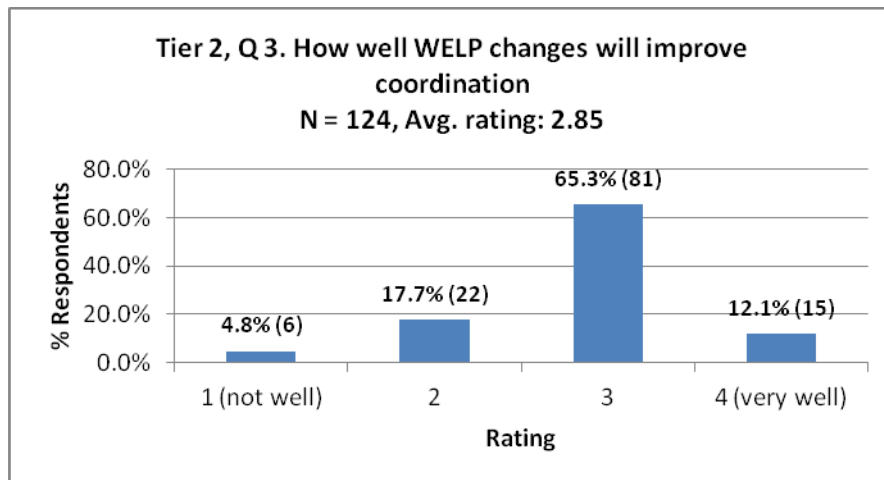
- **Child-centered** (1 respondent): Goals must support development of child-centered programs and learning environments

h. Stakeholder engagement:

- **Like** (1 respondent): Essential to be effective; use public forums more than notices.
- **Concerns about concept** (2 respondents): Weak; leaves too much power in one hand and does not seem equitable; not clear if engagement is two-way or top-down.
- **Concerns about implementation** (1 respondent): Risk of being ineffectual if resources are spread through too many forms of engagement.

Tier 2, Question 3. How well will the proposed changes to the Washington Early Learning Partnership and the suggested roles and functions improve coordination among state agencies?

Total responses: 124 (50 skipped the question). More than three-quarters of respondents (77.4%) gave a rating of 3 or 4.



Comments to Question 3 (Total responses: 57): The comments below include those made in Question 2 for recommendation a. (adding DOH and DSHS to the WELP), plus comments to this question.

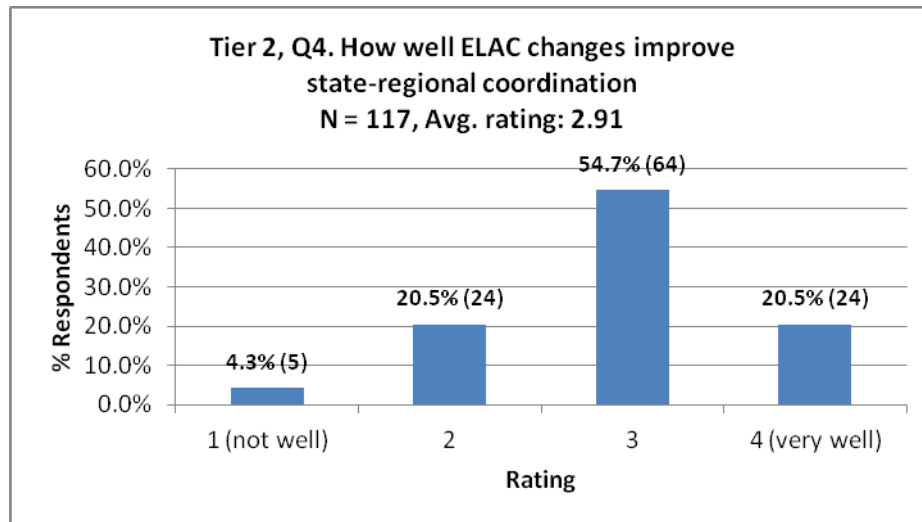
- **Like** (7 respondents): Better coordination; powerful; intersect more on shared responsibilities; address processes, funding and policy issues; could provide model for coalition expansion; potential for creating unified goals for smoother service delivery pathways.
- **Concerns about concept** (8 respondents): “Inviting” DSHS is soft; not sure this changes working in silos; needs an “intentional structure” for the coordination to see that it happens; coordination is ineffective unless all agencies focus on what is best for children; fear muddle of bureaucracies; adding more agencies will add complexity but not results; DOH and DSHS have too many other responsibilities so won’t be child-focused; safety net is too gutted by the recession, need to look at non-state agencies.
- **Concerns about implementation** (6 respondents): Effectiveness depends on the commitment from the top of the agencies, level of representatives chosen and time constraints of staff; stronger commitment is needed from K-12, especially for P-3 alignment; will require staff and administrative support.
- **Concerns about communication** (2 respondents): Need for better communication about policies; paramount is to interagency communication (such as between HCA and DOH) to braid funding streams for early intervention.
- **Other concerns** (3 respondents): Need to focus on reducing duplicative paperwork for providers; policies for subsidy and fingerprinting are roadblocks; address early intervention needs in writing.
- **Add pediatricians** (2 respondents): Include a WCAPP representative.

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- **Add higher ed** (4 respondents): Just as important role as OSPI.
- **Add Dept. of the Blind** (1 respondent)
- **Add CTED** (1 respondent)
- **Add SICC** (2 respondents)
- **Add regional Office of Head Start** (group of 35)
- **Accountability and transparency** (6 respondents): Agencies should be accountable to the governor for performance measures, or to legislature; an endorsement from the governor or legislature would help; needs increased transparency; include a few staff who work directly with families to increase accountability; provide a monthly newsletter and articles in other publications about the actions and proposals in the pipeline.
- **Shared goals** (3 respondents): Partners need to be open and have shared goals; need to adopt common goals that are integrated into the entire system; more consistency is needed in rules and regulations to streamline programs; agencies need to be willing to tackle contradictions in RCW and WACs that sabotage a unified approach.
- **Coordination** (3 respondents): WELP agencies should require grantees to coordinate services with others; coordination needs to be at all levels, including local school district and Head Start; create a central intake service and eligibility determination for all the agencies.
- **Cultural competence** (2 respondents): Agencies do not currently use a racial equity lens in all their work; lines of communication need to be improved with diverse communities.

Tier 2, Question 4. How well will the proposed changes to the Early Learning Advisory Council and the suggested roles and functions for ELAC improve State-Regional coordination?

Total responses: 117 (57 skipped the question). Three-quarters (75.2%) of respondents gave a rating of 3 or 4.



Comments to Question 4 (Total responses: 59): The comments below include those made in Question 2 for recommendations b. – e., plus the comments made to this question.

- **Like** (10 respondents): Like adding parents and representatives of Regional Coalitions; true parent involvement is crucial; add parents who represent a larger community (such as Head Start Policy Council); an ELAC workplan is essential and past due; could help bridge gap between state and local partners
- **Concern about concept** (15 respondents): Must have some power to implement change; caution against creating the state “agenda” before input processes happen; 40 seems too large to accomplish such a mammoth task; larger membership is challenging and needs thoughtful orientation and effective structure of subcommittees; needs more stakeholder input; meeting logistics could be a problem; don’t need more advisors, need more direct line staff; coordination may improve but not sure it will impact services children receive; additions will not provide clarity, need to hear from parents/families directly; not all regional

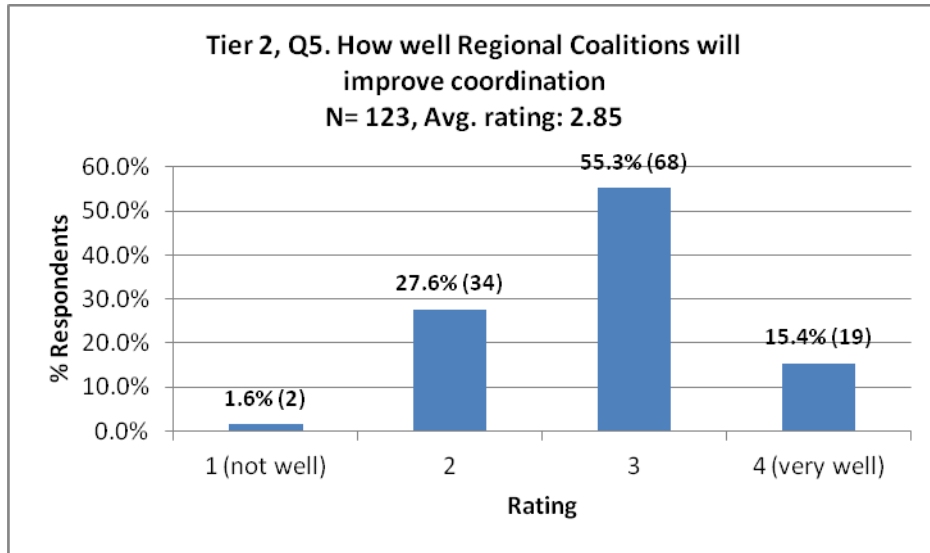
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coalitions are up to the task for sharing regional needs and using information from ELAC; need more intentional integration of health and early learning services; left out coordination with medical homes; public K-12 is a very large system with different purposes—consider an advisory relationship instead of membership; what is the relationship between ELAC and ELAA?; the group that feels least connected is staff and coordinators of programs.

- **Concern about implementation** (6 respondents): Unclear what the state will do with the information and if it will be used to guide decisions; it takes time to build relationships and the people listed are very busy; will need a strong commitment to make sure the parent members feel welcomed and have training and tools to navigate jargon and process; parents and providers will need to make up for a day's lost wages, transportation cost, child care; ELAC needs to have a clear and large emphasis on child care providers and licensing policies; members need to have experience working across traditional ECE divisions.
- **Add higher ed** (4 respondents): Higher ed is more closely connected to providers and families than coalitions are.
- **Add SICC or early intervention providers** (5 respondents): Include or create a connection between ELAC and SICC through regular communication and reporting; or add Family Resource Coordinator or County ICC member; include more than one early intervention provider as a member.
- **Add pediatricians and/or other health representatives** (2 respondents): Health is foundational; have a Health & Optimal Child Development subcommittee of ELAC.
- **Include more provider representatives** (2 respondents): Include at least one from Spokane or Eastern WA.
- **Add Tribal nations** (1 respondent)
- **Add or involve business partners** (1 respondent)
- **Add legislative advocates** (1 respondent)
- **Add representatives from statewide agencies that connect families to resources** (1 respondent)
- **Local perspective** (8 respondents): Access to ELAC from regional level is essential—hold meetings in different locations across the state to expand opportunities to hear families' voice, or offer via K-20 webinars at ESDs or CCAs; include ways for local communities to share what is working well and what is not, and use the feedback to support continuous quality improvement; meeting dates and times need to be accessible to parents (i.e., evenings and weekends).
- **Structure** (3 respondents): Needs an exec team and committees doing the work; have work groups address issues associated with DEL systems; require that coalitions are prepared to respond with a regional voice.
- **Communication** (3 respondents): Need a formal two-way communication mechanism; create increased opportunities for communication.
- **Cultural competence** (2 respondents): Include stakeholders and members from API communities.
- **Public understanding and public will** (2 respondents): Add role of helping mobilize efforts to build public will about importance of early learning and funding needs; have community cafes about the needs of communities and importance of early learning.

Tier 2, Question 5. How well will the proposed changes to the Early Learning Regional Coalitions and the suggested roles and functions for these coalitions improve coordination within each region?

Total responses: 123 (51 skipped the question). More than two-thirds (70.7%) of respondents gave a rating of 3 or 4.



Comments to Question 5 (Total responses: 48): The comments below include those made in Question 2 for recommendation f., plus the comments made to this question.

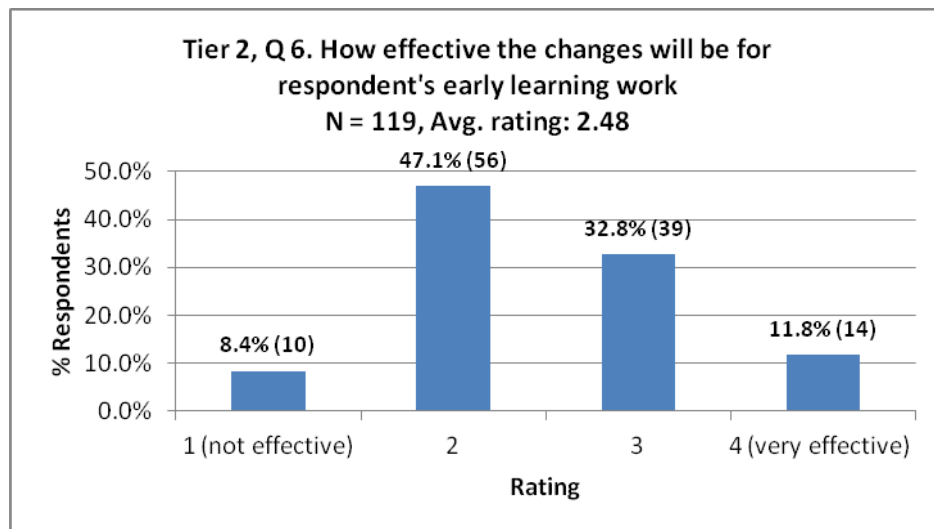
- **Like** (3 respondents): Strong approach to networking resources and service delivery; useful for coordination; provides more clarity around role and function of the coalitions.
- **Concern about the concept** (8 respondents): Need clarification on who is the lead—Early Achievers or regional consultants?; ill-defined as to what organization is to drive what kind of change in what geographies; need to be held to higher standard, not just local preferences; hard with everyone’s busy workloads; hard to synthesize disparate regions for statewide strategy and impact; each region has diverse coalitions; large regional coalitions will be challenged in getting grassroots consensus; focus of this massive effort needs to stay on local and regional conversation as a lateral collaboration.
- **Concern about implementation** (3 respondents): Need to be linked back to state work across state agencies in addition to ELAC; work together to put families first; better communication is needed between Regional Coalitions and County ICCs.
- **Strengthening and resources needed** (12 respondents): Funding needed to involve local stakeholders; resources are needed for empowerment of parents, families and FFN caregivers; wasted effort without added resources; will need support beyond an annual grant; many coalitions will need help with organizational infrastructure; multi-county coalitions need help with engagement; need help focusing on “most important things” in addition to local needs.
- **Participants** (8 respondents): Child Care Aware agencies have been the hard workers at the local level and need to be included in critical roles and functions they already do well; needs to be group of carefully chosen members including much more diversity than this survey; involve mental health and medical practitioners; involve pediatricians and their organizations, who could take information back to the regional health provider community; invite all child care directors/owners to participate in regional meetings; engage a broader group of providers; parents who use early learning and health services are currently not well represented—talk to them about how they want information other than meetings.
- **Role** (8 respondents): More clarity needed, especially since each coalition is so different; suggest using coalitions as labs for pilots and impact measurement; role of regional coalitions should be to build capacity for local coalitions to get the work done on the ground; build relationships with immigrant and disability communities; success depends on extent coalitions are allow to “govern” as opposed to “fall in line”; include the coalitions in discussions of changes in their roles and governing documents
- **Other possible regional leads** (2 respondents): Other regional players, such as Child Care Aware or ESDs might be better able to handle the regional role.

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- **Accountability** (2 respondents): Needs accountability measures if coalitions not making adequate progress; who will ensure there is genuine participation?
- **Cultural competence** (2 respondents): Include stakeholders and members from API communities.
- **Public understanding and public will** (1 respondent): Add role of mobilizing grassroots efforts to make funders aware of needs and value in early learning.
- **Communication** (1 respondent): Utilize technology to facilitate frequent communication.

Tier 2, Question 6. Overall, how effective will these changes be in helping you in your early learning work?

Total responses: 119 (55 skipped the question). More than half (55.5%) of respondents showed by their ratings (1 or 2) that they were not confident the changes would help them in their early learning work.



Comments to Question 6 (Total responses: 48): Some commenters liked the improved and two-way communication. Many commenters were unsure of how the changes would help in their early learning work, or expressed qualifications about how effective they would be; some advocated for different priorities.

- **Helpful** (11 respondents): More holistic approach; should help with better communication with state policy people; hopeful we will begin to establish some universal expectations for early childhood education for all; the mechanisms for two-way communication will help; gives clear format for regional work and communicating to the wider community; supports increased networks and communication; having one or two statewide performance goals would be a good thing.
- **Maybe, depending on structure** (4 respondents): State's approach to collaboration should mirror other Communities of Learning or Professional Learning Communities; not sure without more detail; include public libraries in the coalitions; state-defined metrics need to be scalable to the local level.
- **Maybe, depending on implementation** (13 respondents): Wary because leadership will be critical for success; only as effective as the groups are in working together; if there is support staff and substitutes to cover work while we are collaborating; if there is sharing so there is one resource to go to to find resources available and the required qualifications, etc.; if people for ELAC are carefully selected and the work already developed by coalitions and ELAA is used; if there is support for regional coalitions to build infrastructure and convene stakeholders; might help with getting timely communication to people "on the ground" about changes at the state level; if we keep in mind first what is best for the child/family; depends on effectiveness of communication and feedback loops; if communication with state is "rich and regular"
- **Probably not** (9 respondents): Might be helpful at the state level but not sure the changes help individual programs; don't see how it would filter down to our work; don't see disability community or higher education in the plan; some groups will not do their work, which will cause more problems than we have now; don't see

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a connection; majority of providers will not be able to be engaged on an ongoing basis; ELAC meeting agenda allows 5 minutes for public comment—why bother?; adds another layer to a system that does not communicate well.

- **Not effective, different help is needed** (11 respondents): Stop “building the case” and do the work with children and families; state should focus resources on improving access in underserved areas; instead, need policy changes for subsidy, portable background checks, licensing fees, pay rates, tuition costs; improved relationship between DEL and the child care union would help; need DEL staff to be more accessible for phone calls and STARS system to be more provider friendly; more training and timely answers to questions; less coalitions and meetings and more training and funding for early learning providers; change Title 1 rules at the state level so funds can be used to train school staff and community providers; funding for infant mental health across the state.

Tier 2, Question 7. Do you have any additional comments?

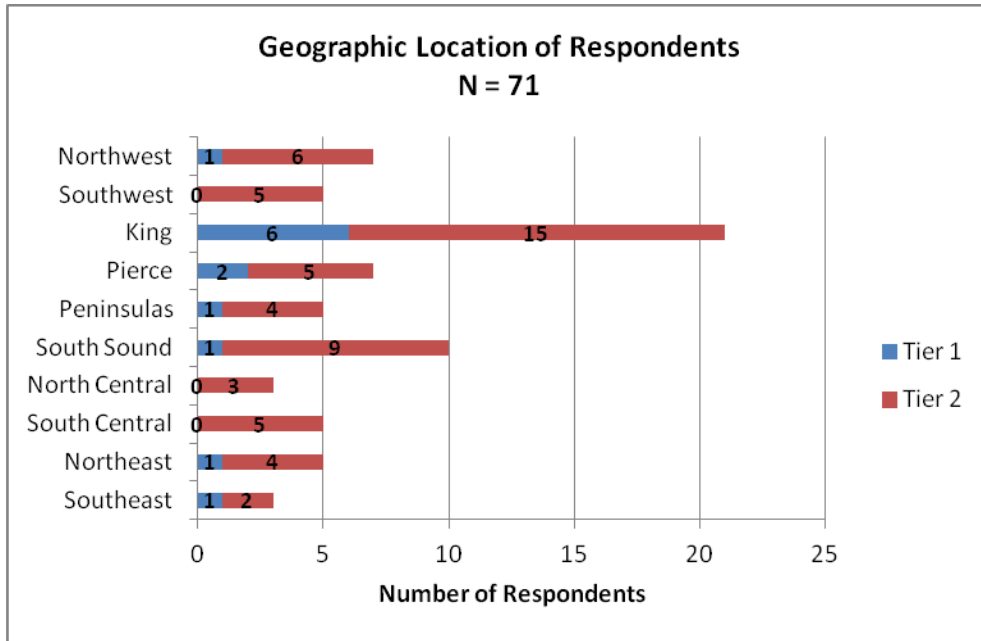
Total responses: 30 (144 skipped the question).

- **Thanks** (14 respondents): Good progress; including various stakeholders such as parents is very much needed; clear, concise and feels good; excited to see this roll out.
- **Involve other organizations/programs** (5 respondents): Suggest a coordinator at each pediatric clinic to assist with developmental screening, and a team or person to meet with families whose newborns are in intensive care; collaborate with local health departments, who offer many services and information and are an invaluable resource for providers and families; existing programs that have been shown to work but are not part of state bureaucracy should be involved (such as WCAAP, Parent to Parent, programs targeted at immigrant children) since they have a complex web of contacts; look at innovative programs in communities that are working well and share information about them rather than creating something new; must involve both community/technical college system and four-year colleges.
- **Cultural competence** (2 respondents): The Racial Equity work being done in the current partnership needs to be resourced and supported at the regional and local levels; changes need to be culturally competent.
- **Reduce complexity** (2 respondents): Plan presents a complex, top-down system which will sink under its own weight, instead, focus on what makes a difference for the child and family; recognize incoming governor’s focus on lean management and pare away as much extra processes as possible.
- **Focus on providing information to parents** (2 respondents): Need to gather information on available programs and map it out for families; need more streamlined resource information to share with parents.
- **Public awareness/will** (1 respondent): More focus on public outreach about the importance of early childhood development and the value of being involved in child’s learning.
- **Funding** (1 respondent): Plan should include seeking funds collaboratively to help funnel to programs at the ground level.
- **Communication** (1 respondent): ELAC should communicate with the coalitions as Thrive does—effective emails.
- **Timeliness** (1 respondent): Takes too long to coordinate to make an impact on those who need services now.
- **Recognize schools’ role** (1 respondent): Plan needs to recognize that public schools are required to have preschool (such as for children in IEPs, Head Start, ECEAP) and should use the term P-3 instead of K-3.

IV. Who Responded

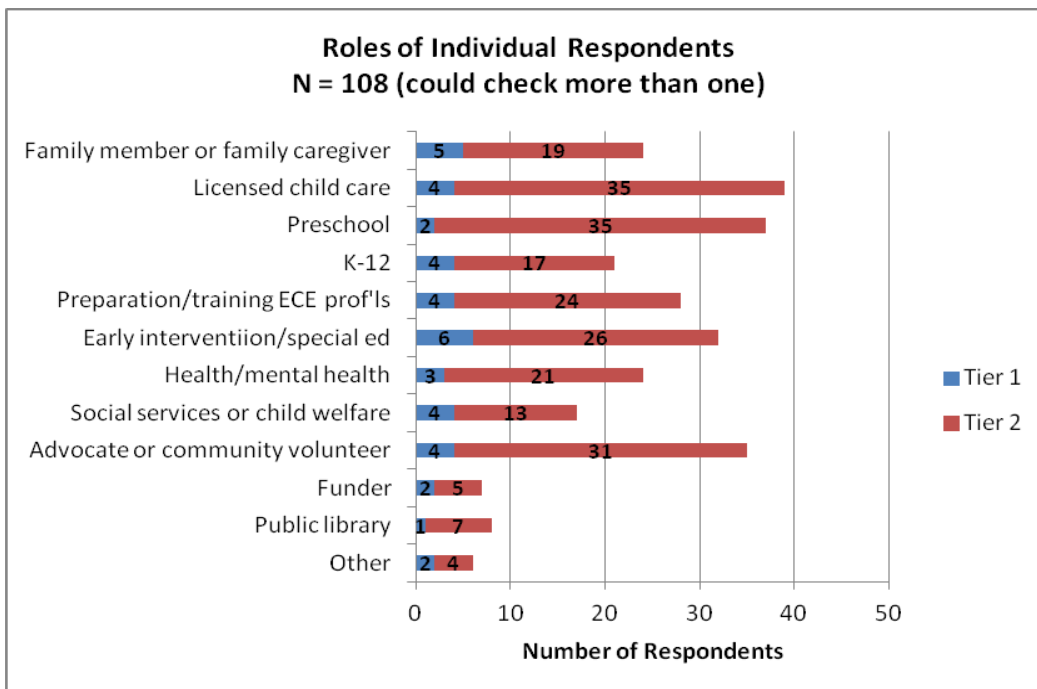
Review of Preliminary Recommendations. Among 188 individual respondents, 49 said they reviewed the less detailed version of the Preliminary Recommendations, and 139 said they reviewed the more detailed version. Additionally, 35 participants in a group meeting commented on the detailed version.

Geographic location. 71 respondents provided zip code information. The regions they covered included:



In addition to the above, the group discussion included individuals representing geographic areas across the state, though zip codes of individual participants were not recorded.

Early learning roles. 108 respondents provided information about their primary roles in early learning. The table below summarizes their responses. The roles were distributed among all categories, with the top three being licensed child care, preschool, and advocate or community volunteer. Additionally, the group discussion was comprised of 35 Head Start and ECEAP directors.



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Organizational affiliations. 65 respondents provided their organizational affiliations. These are listed below (organizations identified more than once are noted in parentheses). The organizations highlighted in yellow are those that at least one Tier 1 respondent listed.

- ACAP Child and Family Services
- Adventure Day Care
- American Academy of Pediatrics, Washington State Chapter (2)
- Anacortes School District
- Associated Ministries
- Associated Recreation Council
- Bates Technical College
- Battle Ground Public Schools
- Bethel School District
- Central Washington Oral Health Foundation
- Centralia College (2)
- Chase's Playhouse
- Child Care Aware
- Children's Museum of Tacoma
- Clark County Public Health
- Columbia County Public Health
- **County Coalition**
- Cowlitz County Health
- Discovery Montessori School
- Eastside Pathways
- Enterprise for Progress in the Community (EPIC)
- ESD 105
- Everett Public Library
- FRC
- **Friends of Youth (2)**
- Grace Lutheran Church/Precious In His Sight CDC
- Greater Trinity Academy
- Hayes Child Development Center
- **Healthy Start (2)**
- Hope for the Future
- Inland Northwest Early Learning Alliance
- **Kat's Early Learning & Child Care**
- King County Early Intervention
- La Casa Hogar
- League of Women Voters Washington
- Lewis County Early Learning Coalition
- Lower Elwha Klallam Tribe
- Mason County Early Learning Coalition
- Mid-Columbia Children's Council
- **Mount Vernon City Library**
- North Central Early Learning Collaborative
- **Office of Superintendent for Public Instruction - Child Nutrition Services**
- Olympic-Kitsap Peninsulas Early Learning Centers
- Opportunity Council
- Pacific Northwest Montessori Association
- **Port Angeles School District**
- Port Gamble S'Klallam Tribe
- Private Practitioner
- Public Health Seattle and King County
- **School District**
- SOAR
- Spokane County Library District
- Spokane Public Library
- Starbright Early Learning Center
- **Sweet Pea Cottage Preschool of the Arts**
- **The Arc of King County**
- The Evergreen State College Campus Children's Center
- University of Washington Center for Public Health Nutrition
- Valued Kids
- Washington Association for the Education of Young Children
- Washington Educators in Early Learning
- Washington Federation of Independent Schools
- Washington State Commission on Asian Pacific American Affairs
- Washington State Department of Early Learning
- **Washington State Department of Health**
- **Washington State Health Care Authority**
- Washington State University Child Development Program, Vancouver
- Whatcom County Library System

Additionally, the group discussion of 35 Head Start and ECEAP directors represented a range of agencies including non-profit, college, school district, county, and ESDs.

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Racial or ethnic background. Among 60 respondents who provided this data, 48 indicated they are Caucasian/white, 6 identified as Hispanic, 1 said they are Asian American and Pacific Islander, 2 identified as Native American, 1 identified as African American, and 2 indicated they are multi-racial. (The Tier 1 reviewers were: 10 Caucasian, 1 Hispanic, 1 Native American.) The group discussion included 32 Caucasian, 1 Native American, 1 Asian American and 1 African American participant.

Constituencies. Respondents were asked if they are involved in any particular geographic areas, communities or groups. The responses, from 80 people, covered a wide range of stakeholders. These are grouped below into several categories, with numbers in parentheses indicating number of responses. The constituencies highlighted in yellow are those that at least one Tier 1 respondent listed.

Geographic Areas

- Central Washington
- King County (3)
- Lakewood area (2)
- Pierce County (2)
- Rural areas (21)
- Seattle (2)
- Small cities
- Snohomish County
- Southeast Washington
- Southwest Washington
- Statewide (2)
- Suburban
- Thurston County
- Urban (3)
- Yakima County (3)

Early Learning Organizations & Coalitions

- Benton-Franklin Early Learning Alliance
- Community-based coalitions of medical clinics, mental health clinics, agencies and organizations, governmental and non-governmental, serving the unmet needs of children in my county
- Director Association
- Early Learning Action Alliance (2)
- Early Learning Coalition (23)
- Early Learning Public Library Partnership
- First 5 FUNdamentals (2)
- Infant and Toddler Coaching program
- Infant/Toddler Regional Steering Committee
- Investing in Children Coalition (2)
- King County Early Learning Coalition (2)
- Local Birth to Three
- Mason County Early Learning Coalition
- NAEYC
- North Central Early Learning Coalition

- PCAEYC
- Pierce County AEYC
- Seeds to Success
- SELF Ready Professionals
- SELF Ready Schools group in SW Washington
- SSAEYC
- Statewide newborn screening services
- Thrive by Five Washington
- WAKids
- Washington Association for the Education of Young Children (3)
- Washington Educators in Early Learning (2)
- Washington State Association of Head Start & ECEAP (2)
- Yakima Investing in Children Committee

Child Care and Preschool

- Arts-based preschool serving 200+ children in the Queen Anne, West Seattle, and Sand Point communities
- Benton-Franklin Family Child Care Association
- Child Care Aware
- Child Care Providers (3)
- Faith based preschool
- Family/center-based child care (2)
- FFN caregivers
- Head Start/Early Head Start/ECEAP (40)
- Lesbian and Gay Child Care Task Force-Seattle
- Preschool
- Urban independent preschools

Culturally Diverse Communities

- African-American community (2)
- American Indian tribal communities (5)
- Asian American and Pacific Islander communities statewide
- Diverse, multi-cultural communities (3)

- Families with ESL (3)
- Latino/Hispanic communities (6)
- Migrant and seasonal communities
- Puyallup Tribe
- **Refugee and immigrant communities** (13)
- Yakama Nation Tribal Nation

Schools/Educational System

- **Academic instruction librarian**
- Advisory Board for Early Learning at Pierce College and Tacoma Community College
- American Federation of Teachers
- Educator with immigrant communities
- Higher ed/community college with early childhood education program (2)
- Independent schools
- Montessori
- Pierce County Higher Education
- Professional preparation for early childhood education
- University Lab School

Other Community-based Organizations

- Children's Museum
- David Matteson Literacy Campaign
- Eastside Early Intervention
- Family support service provider
- **Non-profit organizations** (2)
- Richland School District ACES-ECE collaboration
- Skagit County Workgroup for Autism
- Washington Campus Children's Center Coalition

Other

- American Academy of Pediatrics, Washington State Chapter
- At-risk children and families
- **Concerned citizens**
- Faith-based communities (5)
- Foster families
- **Foster parent**
- Homeless
- Legislative advocacy
- **Low-income families/communities** (6)
- Military families
- **Parent**
- **Pregnant and parenting teens** (4)
- Professional organization
- **Special needs children** (6)

Appendix N: Second Cultural Competence Review by National Equity Project

Cultural Competence Review
Submitted to State and Local Coordination Project Team
January 16th, 2013



Scope of Review

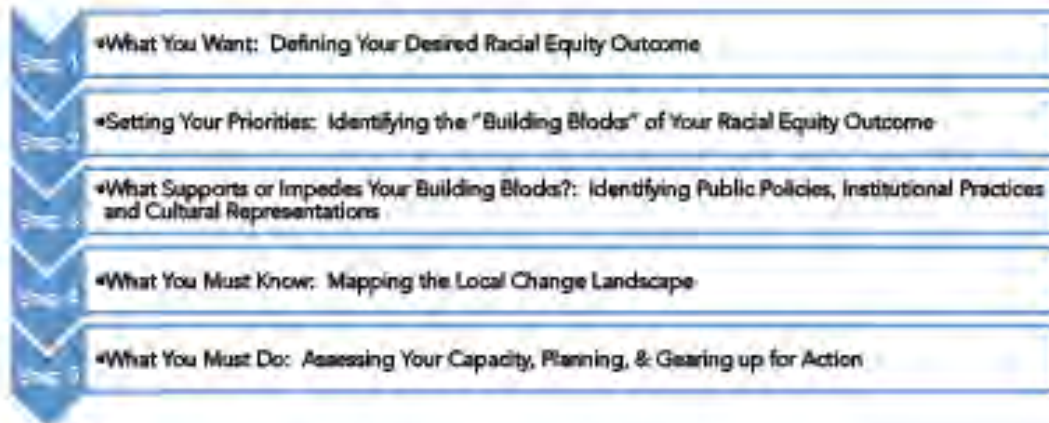
The National Equity Project has been contracted by the Washington Early Learning State and Local Coordination Project to conduct a Cultural Competence Review of the project's Preliminary Recommendations, to provide feedback as it develops its Final Recommendations. The purpose of this review is to provide findings and recommendations to the project on the document's attention to racial equity and cultural inclusion, and likelihood for having a positive impact for Washington children and families furthest from opportunity. The review included the Preliminary Recommendations and supporting documents:

- o Preliminary Recommendations
- o Performance Goals discussion paper
- o Levels of Engagement discussion paper
- o ELAC Membership discussion paper
- o Summary of comments from phase one public outreach
- o Survey form for phase two public outreach
- o Initial Cultural Competence Review conducted during the project's planning phase.

The scope and objectives for this review were developed in discussions with the Project Planning Team and the completed review was presented to and discussed with the Project Planning Team.

Review Criteria

The framework used for this review is the Racial Equity Theory Of Change, a guide for designing strategies to close chronic racial outcome gaps developed by the Aspen Institute, Roundtable on Community Change. The Racial Equity Theory Of Change (RETOC) outlines a five step process for developing strategy:



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RETOC Terminology	
Building Blocks	Building Blocks are the necessary and sufficient preconditions needed to achieve your goal
Public Policies	Public policies are laws that directly allocate public resources and indirectly influence the distribution of private resources.
Institutional Practices	Institutional practices are the cultural norms, and decision-making and standard operating procedures of public and private institutions
Cultural Representations	Cultural representations are frames, popular images and stereotypes of people of color that, though damaging to their prospects for achieving genuine equality of opportunity, are widely seen as "unbiased" or "harmless."
Local Change Landscape	Local Change Landscape is the elected officials, interest groups, government administrators, business executives, media and entertainment organizations, unions, opinion leaders, and other important local/state actors who must be (a) engaged to bring about change, and (b) monitored, either because they have opposed such change historically, or can be expected to oppose this proposed change.

Adapted from the Aspen Institute, Roundtable on Community Change, www.aspeninstitute.org

The RETOC process is consistent with the Aspen Institute's goals to:

- Broaden our understanding of the causes and the problems of poverty, inequality and community distress in America
- Clarify our understanding of the forces that maintain the racial disparity status quo and limit the success of strategies for change
- Identify how and why an emphasis on racial equity might enhance the possibility of success in current and future social change efforts and
- Highlight new approaches that could complement and reinforce existing activities

The RETOC steps were also utilized in the National Equity Project's initial Cultural Competence Review for the Washington Early Learning State and Local Coordination Project to provide feedback on the project process during the planning phase.

Findings

The findings from our review of the Preliminary Recommendations and supporting documents are organized around each of the RETOC steps. They include examples and evidence of attention to racial equity and cultural inclusion consistent with the RETOC guide, and opportunities for strengthening the racial equity focus of the document. When using the RETOC as a planning tool, the process begins with Step 1 What You Want and ends with Step 5 What You Must Do, in order to backwards map from target outcome to action planning. For the purpose of review, we've organized our findings in reverse order starting with Step 5, in order to reflect the timeline of plan implementation.

Step 5 What You Must Do: Assessing Your Capacity, Planning, & Gearing up for Action

Examples and Evidence

- Our initial Cultural Competence Review of the project work plan and process found that the process outlined for the project was consistent with the RETOC steps and demonstrated plans and procedures for including diverse voices and perspectives.
- A few brief descriptions of the project process and number of interviews conducted are included on Page 1 of the Preliminary Recommendations.

2 of 7

Opportunities

- Adding specific mention of the project's goal of including perspectives from the state's diversity of race, culture, language, income and region would introduce the project's intention to address issues of racial equity and to hear historically under-represented voices.
- Our initial Cultural Competence Review included questions for each stage of the process to highlight the essential reflection for each RETOC step. These questions may be useful guides for the examples and evidence to highlight from the project process.

Step 4 What You Must Know: Mapping the Local Change Landscape

Examples and Evidence

- Clear descriptions of some of the key leadership groups involved in Early Learning are detailed in the "How is early learning coordinated now" section on page 3. The descriptions of the ELAC and Regional Early Learning Coalitions describe their relationships with various stakeholder groups.
- The Capacity Barriers and Coordination Barriers listed on page 2 describe some of the stakeholder dynamics, particularly related to access and communication. Some differences and disparities are noted, but few specific demographic details are included. Examples:
 - "Not enough people to meet professional standards in some parts of the state"
 - "Rural families and communities are isolated, with unique challenges"

Opportunities

- Further description of the known power and social capital dynamics within and between leadership groups and stakeholder groups, can begin to map the change landscape that any successful early learning strategy will need to navigate.
- Sharing observed data patterns disaggregated by race and other demographics, may be an opportunity to describe differences in access, experience and outcome based on race, culture, language, income and region, and to begin to make the case for "What changes are being suggested".
- Sharing relevant examples and patterns from the stakeholder interviews can describe how race and various stakeholder roles are depicted in the key narratives about needs, access, and decision-making authority in early learning.

Step 3 What Supports or Impedes Your Building Blocks?: Identifying Public Policies, Institutional Practices and Cultural Representations

Examples and Evidence

- Two of the Opportunities listed on page 2 highlight key principles for achieving racial equity: Partnering with communities furthest from opportunity in planning services, and providing flexibility that respects local needs and context.
 - "Engage and empower the families and communities whose children are experiencing the greatest disparities to help plan services and monitor progress and results"
 - "Provide more opportunities to set statewide funding goals and accountability measures and allow the flexibility for communities to tailor implementation plans to meet local needs"
- The Capacity Barriers and Coordination Barriers listed on page 2 describe several of the practices that will need to be addressed in order to make progress. Examples:
 - "Too few teachers have the preparation and tools to support children's learning in developmentally and culturally appropriate ways"

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- "No measures of program, system and child outcomes that both the state and local communities are commonly using"
- The Capacity Barriers and Coordination Barriers listed on page 2 describe one policy that will need to be addressed in order to make progress
 - "Agencies use different geographic boundaries for their initiatives"

Opportunities

- There are few references throughout the Preliminary Recommendations to differences in experience or outcomes based on race, culture, language, income or region. The ways in which current practices and policies are differently impacting families and communities is essential data for designing strategies that will address racial equity.
- No specific references to cultural representations (racially or culturally based stereotypes, assumptions and associations) were found. The surfacing of cultural representations can provide opportunities for identifying practices and policies that reinforce these images, as well as for planning to check and counteract these assumptions.
- The interviews conducted for the Initial Outreach Survey and Opportunities, Barriers and Needs Report may provide ready examples and patterns for practices, policies and cultural representations.
 - Example: In the Outreach Survey Summary, participants shared their observations about the Coordination Barrier "Transition from early learning to elementary school is tough for families". The responses included the observation that the "gap for transition is especially large for families who speak other languages and for communities of color". Hearing, investigating and sharing patterns like this can reinforce the need for strategies to be targeted to support those most impacted.

Step 2 Setting Your Priorities: Identifying the "Building Blocks" of Your Racial Equity Outcome

Examples and Evidence

- In "What changes are being suggested" on pages 3 - 4, the recommended building blocks are listed and briefly described:
 - Statewide Performance Goals
 - Stakeholder Engagement
 - State-Local Communication and Connection
- Each of these building blocks is described in greater detail in a discussion paper. Each of these discussion papers details specific intentions, practices and policies that support racial equity and cultural inclusion.
 - The Performance Goals Examples
 - "Monitor statewide and regional progress toward the goals and understand issues regarding equity of access, program quality and outcomes for children in geographic, racial, socio-economic communities across the state"
 - "Advance the Early Learning Plan and make important contributions to improving: systems, equitable access to high quality services, and results for children, including racial equity"
 - Levels of Engagement Examples
 - "Do we have enough information to determine an effective and efficient course of action that will work for the breadth of Washington families, cultures and communities? If not, what additional information do we need and what is the best way to get it? "

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- ❖ "Do we need more information about how to reach specific groups of the children, families and others that the program is intended to serve?"
- ELAC Membership Example
 - "The Council shall include diverse, statewide representation. Its members shall be intentionally recruited and selected to reflect regional, racial and cultural diversity so that ELAC can represent the needs of all children and families in the state. However, the membership details do not describe how diverse representation will be achieved.
 - The charts on key coordination structures and functions provides a description of the recommended changes in leadership structure that embed responsibility for identified changes in practices and policies in each leadership group's charter.

Opportunities

- Incorporating the more explicit references to racial equity from each of the discussion papers into the Final Recommendations, both in the "What changes are being suggested and in the charts of key coordination structures and functions, would make the intended changes in relationships and communication across demographics and role more likely to be understood and achieved.
- For the Statewide Performance Goals, the creation of universal goals can lead to reproduction of historic patterns of outcomes unless success is explicitly defined as ensuring that each identified demographic within the state is achieving at the level identified in the goal.
- The ELAC Membership discussion paper includes a clear policy statement about diverse representation but provides little guidance on roles and practices for achieving this representation. In moving to implementation, it will be important to clarify how this representation can be achieved, who is responsible for ensuring that this policy is implemented, and when in the membership selection process this will be addressed to reduce uncertainty and inconsistency in implementation.

Step 1 What You Want: Defining Your Desired Racial Equity Outcome

Examples and Evidence

- The project's outcome is identified in the project plan as "Better aligned action supporting children's learning". The Preliminary Recommendations section "How will coordination be affected by these recommendations?" on page 7 shares some examples of improved coordination, alignment and communication that would be evidence of the successful implementation of the building blocks outlined in Step 2.

Opportunities

- In addition to evidence of successful implementation of the building blocks, the description of the intended impact for this project should include expected evidence of changes to the currently racialized patterns of outcome and experiences that are highlighted in Steps 3 and 4 of the RETOC.

Potential Alignment with Advancing Racial Equity in Early Learning Outcome Map

In a related effort to incorporate racial equity as a design priority in early learning strategic planning, Thrive by Five Washington convened a series of meetings with a diverse set of stakeholders representing parents, practitioners, researchers, community leaders, Department of Early Learning and the Office of Superintendent of Public Instruction to develop a roadmap for Advancing Racial Equity in Early Learning. They utilized the Racial Equity Theory Of Change as a guide for their

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planning process, resulting in a Draft Outcome Map to guide their further work. Their identified Racial Equity Outcome is that “Programs, policies and funding decisions to implement the Early Learning Plan are well informed and prioritized in response to the experience, perspective and needs of people of color”. Although this outcome is different from the Washington Early Learning State and Local Coordination Project’s Outcome of “Better aligned action supporting children’s learning”, there is significant overlap in the intentions, observations and actions identified by the two projects.

The below table catalogs by RETOC step some of the excerpts from the Draft Outcome Map that seemed most relevant and potentially useful in the development of the Final Recommendations. These excerpts are intended to provide additional examples, ideas and language from a closely related project.

RETOC Step	Excerpts from Advancing Racial Equity in Early Learning Draft Outcome Map
Step 5 What You Must Do: Assessing Your Capacity, Planning, & Gearing up for Action	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> - Use disaggregated school district-level birth through eight information to identify ways to improve opportunity for children and families far from it - Invite communities to participate in decisions about defining outcomes - Create feedback loops that allow community participation in course correction - Actively engage tribal leadership in defining desired outcomes and participating in decision-making processes/entities, from the beginning - Actively recruit people of color in defining desired outcomes and participating in decision-making processes/entities, from the beginning - Create flexible tables/venues/locations/methods of participating in meetings and other decision-making conversations - Build racial equity into the work plans of initiatives and decision-making bodies
Step 4 What You Must Know: Mapping the Local Change Landscape	See attached Advancing Racial Equity in Early Learning Draft Outcome Map for a list and description of Potential Allies and Associated Opportunities
Step 3 What Supports or Impedes Your Building Blocks?: Identifying Public Policies, Institutional Practices and Cultural Representations	<p>Policies</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> - Funding and support are available to allow/honor individual, organizational and tribal capacity to participate equally in decision-making processes - People of color are intentionally represented in hiring, appointment and election of decision makers - Education, experience, demonstrated commitment and reflection of children’s culture are valued in assessment of quality of early learning programming and professional qualifications - Educational equivalency and/or competency assessment processes exist to honor the importance and support the development and progression of early learning professionals who reflect children’s language and cultures as part of the early learning workforce <p>Practices</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> - Communities of color are intentionally reached and engaged by meeting in places convenient to them, providing interpretation services and using varied solutions to promote access - Leadership coaching or mentoring is available for people of color within organizations to support them being advocates for their community in decision-making processes/relationship building - Local communities engage a broad array of parents and professionals in local work and receive support and guidance as to how - Decision making bodies actively engage with members of diverse communities before making impactful decisions - Regular thought provoking experiences exist to help decision makers be insightful about

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<p style="text-align: center;">Step 3 (cont.) What Supports or Impedes Your Building Blocks?: Identifying Public Policies, Institutional Practices and Cultural Representations</p>	<p>how structures impact those furthest from opportunity</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> - Data are gathered, analyzed and presented with intentional consideration of the cultural belief and framing in which the data is defined, collected and interpreted - Feedback loops provide information and knowledge about the experiences and perspectives of people of color that informs design and refinement of early learning systems
	<p>Cultural Representations</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> - It is readily acknowledged that one cultural voice does not represent all - Children see people who are like them as teachers and community leaders - Communities of color are engaged in defining what is credible and relevant data and how it is collected and used - Robust qualitative data and experience is seen as equally important in the development of approaches that are reflective of the requirements of communities of color. - Promising practices specific to communities of color are recognized as a critical strategy for meeting diverse needs
<p style="text-align: center;">Step 2 Setting Your Priorities: Identifying the "Building Blocks" of Your Racial Equity Outcome</p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> - Community Voice and Influence: There are expanded pathways for voice and influence for those furthest from opportunity - Early Learning System Design and Implementation: State, local & tribal agencies consider historical and current realities of children of color in program design, implementation and coordination
<p style="text-align: center;">Step 1 What You Want: Defining Your Desired Racial Equity Outcome</p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> - Programs, policies and funding decisions to implement the Early Learning Plan are well informed and prioritized in response to the experience, perspective and needs of people of color

Recommendations

- In order for racial equity to be an effective priority in the Washington Early Learning State and Local Coordination Project, the Final Recommendations should demonstrate a consistent explicit narrative on the role of racial equity and cultural inclusion in achieving the state's early learning goals. We recommend that this narrative include evidence and examples of racialized disparities in outcomes and experiences, and the practices, policies and cultural representations that contribute to those disparities. These descriptions provide context and urgency to the recommended building blocks for change and provide guidance for stakeholders and leaders about the landscape that they will need to navigate in order to effect measurable impact.
- Many of the opportunities identified in the findings can be addressed by incorporating details and language from the supporting documents. We recommend mining these documents, as well as the interviews conducted during Stakeholder Interviews and Outreach, and the project's data reports, for further examples and evidence.
- The Advancing Racial Equity in Early Education Outcome Map (currently still in draft form), developed by stakeholders in the early learning community through convening's sponsored by Thrive by Five, is an additional resource from a related Washington State effort using the Racial Equity Theory of Change. We recommend reviewing elements of this document for examples of language for the racial equity narrative and opportunities for alignment.

Appendix O: Comparison: Proposed Performance Goals and Existing Measures

The State and Local Project Steering Committee has recommended creation of a handful of **performance goals and indicators to help state and local partners work together and focus on the same strategic objectives and desired outcomes**. Statewide performance goals have been used effectively in other states. (See discussion paper for a thorough description of the performance goals concept.)

In Washington State the Department of Early Learning already works diligently to respond to a variety of measures, goals and metrics established by the Governor, Legislature, program grants, and other sources. This raises an important question: How would the suggested performance goals be different than the other tools already in place?

Why do we need a new type of performance goal? As described in the concept paper, the proposed performance goals will:

- Focus the joint efforts of state and local early learning partners, rather than solely on the efforts of state agency performance;
- Create consensus and momentum among state and local partners through a collaborative process between DEL, ELAC and the Early Learning Coalitions, to create the performance goals; and,
- Be consistent with other state work plans or objectives, since the performance goals could be a combination of existing goals/targets already established and new goals.

How is this different than existing goals and metrics? The table on the following page describes three documents/processes that provide guidance for DEL's work:

The Government, Management, Accountability and Performance Goals (GMAP) - The GMAP measures provide a selective set of standards that DEL reports on quarterly, and are more focused on the licensing function that DEL performs.

The Washington Early Learning Partnership Annual Priorities (agreed upon by DEL, OSPI, and Thrive by Five Washington) - The Partnership Annual priorities reflect the strategic priorities for the three partner entities (DEL, OSPI, and Thrive), but they reflect an annual work plan as opposed to definitive statements about desired outcomes.

Race to the Top, and excerpts from the successful Race to the Top federal grant - The Race to the Top grant includes numerous targets and measures that the state has agreed to accomplish. These come closest to the kind of statements and metrics that would be included in annual performance goals.

In addition, DEL monitors and reports on twenty three *Early Learning Plan Indicators*. The indicators are a set of metrics (like vital signs) that help to describe the well-being and development of young children over time. However, the Indicators do not describe desired outcomes or shared goals for state and local partners.

Comparison of Selected Measures for the Department of Early Learning

GMap Dashboard Measures (Excerpts from November Report)	Washington Early Learning Partnership Annual Priorities (Sample of 2012 Priorities)	Race to the Top Application (Sample Goals)
<p>Timely Monitoring Visits in Licensed Facilities Target-85%, Actual-80% November Notes: % of visits conducted on time decreased over the last quarter from 87% to 80%. Factors leading to the decline are being addressed.</p>	<p>Improve Pre-School Access & Outcomes (Early Learning Plan Strategy #13) 2012 Action Steps:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Introduce legislation to implement Work Group's recommendations • Legislature passes legislation; funding to begin to implement 	<p>Expand Tiered Quality Rating Improvement System (TORIS) to promote quality & improve access for high-needs children Annual targets and Goals for 2012 - 2015. <u>TORIS 2015 Targets</u></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • 54% of all programs in levels 2-5 • 60% of licensed child care centers in TORIS levels 2-5 • 50% of licensed family child care homes in TORIS levels 2-5 • 73% of Head Start/ECEAP programs in TORIS levels 3-5.
<p>Timely Licensing Complaint Inspections Target-45 days, Actual-39 days November Notes: DEL continues to meet their target. Data are for the 4th quarter of FY12.</p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Steps to begin Phase I completed, including development of program standards, completion of facility study and issuance of RFP to potential providers. 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • 60% of licensed family child care homes in TORIS levels 2-5 • 73% of Head Start/ECEAP programs in TORIS levels 3-5.
<p>Initial Complaint Response Target-85%, Actual-93% November Notes: This was a new measure for the May 2012 Forum. Data are for the 4th quarter of FY12.</p>	<p>Implement Comprehensive Prof. Development and Compensation System (ELP Strategy #23) 2012 Action Steps:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Trainer approval board established • Trainers apply for state approval through MERIT 	<p><u>TORIS 2015 Targets for Children Served</u></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • 60% of children served are in TORIS levels 2-5. • 62% of high need children served are in TORIS levels 2-5
<p>State-Funded Preschool Enrollment Target-100%, Actual 108% November Notes: Average of 8,455 children enrolled in 8,391 ECEAP slots. Enrollment exceeds 100% because children left and were replaced during the month. 50.4% of eligible children were enrolled in ECEAP or Head Start.</p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Establish DEL/OSPI planning team to look at intersection of new trainer approval process and the K-12 system • Trainer modules implemented and required for state-approved trainers • Create communities of learning for executive function practice review • Career lattice embedded in MERIT • Strengthen higher ed partnership • Prepare to launch Professional Development Incentives, 	<p><u>TORIS 2015 Training Goals</u></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • 1,842 of early learning professionals working on credential or degree program as part of TORIS • 25% training available due to Head Start/ECEAP • 20% of TORIS programs trained on formative assessment tools
<p>State-Funded Preschooler Learning Outcomes No Targets November Notes: In a 2011-12 assessment of 15% of ECEAP children, the following percent moved from below age level to at or above age level in core learning areas: social emotional 37%, physical 43%, language 44%, cognitive 55%, literacy 52%, and mathematics 58%.</p>	<p>Align Prekindergarten & K-3 Instructional & Programmatic Practices (ELP Strategy #27) 2012 Action Steps:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Planning committee identified • Surveys of PreK-3rd grade actions • 4 mtgs: review research, analyze surveys, identify draft reccom'dtns • 2 meetings to finalize recommendations. Report written • Partnership approves action plan. 	

Examples of Possible Performance Goals

North Carolina Performance Goal

Goal: 75 percent of all children with special needs in every county – and who receive subsidies or other assistance – will be enrolled in high-quality 4 or 5-star rated child care programs.

Comment: This helped state and local partners collaborate around this goal, and now 94 percent of special needs children receiving subsidies or assistance are in high-quality care settings.

Other Possible Examples for Washington State

Possible Goal: One (1) percent of Washington’s infants under the age of 12 months will be identified as needing early intervention services and determined eligible.

Comment: This could help partners work together to meet/exceed the Early Intervention Program’s performance target.

Possible Goal: X number of infants and toddlers will receive development screening by Y date through the new Within Reach online developmental screening project.

Comment: This could foster collaboration between state and local communities to increase the percentage of young children who receive developmental screening.

Possible Goal: X percentage of vulnerable children (e.g. children receiving state child care subsidies, who are in licensed child care) will be in Early Achievers 3-5 star child care centers and family homes.

Comment: This could help focus attention and collaboration on raising awareness of Early Achievers and ways to help low-income families secure high-quality child care for their children.

Appendix P: Washington Early Learning Partnership Joint Resolution



**The Washington State Early Learning Partnership Joint Resolution
Between
The Washington State Department of Early Learning
And
The Washington State Office of Superintendent of Public Instruction
And
Thrive By Five Washington, the Early Learning Fund**

Whereas, The Washington State Department of Early Learning, the Washington State Office of Superintendent of Public Instruction, and Thrive by Five Washington (the Early Learning Fund) are committed to collaborate on behalf of all young children and families in Washington State in developing a strong, comprehensive early learning system for all children birth to age eight; and

Whereas, we believe that this will only be achieved through a commitment to share responsibility and accountability towards this vision; and

Whereas, we commit to jointly support the development of a high-quality, aligned early learning system that respects and reflects the rich diversity of children and families throughout our state; and

Whereas, at the heart of our shared efforts is our understanding that "school readiness" encompasses four concepts:

**Ready Children + Ready Schools + Ready Parents and Families
+ Ready Communities**

Ready children are healthy and socially, emotionally, and cognitively prepared for success in school and life;

Ready schools are prepared to meet the individual needs of the diverse children who enter kindergarten;

Ready parents and families have the information and resources needed to be their children's first and most important teachers; and

Ready early learning professionals and communities have the information and resources needed to support parents, children and schools; and

Whereas, The Department of Early Learning, the Office of Superintendent of Public Instruction, and Thrive by Five Washington are committed to working together to create an environment of cooperation and an early learning system in Washington State that is capable of supporting readiness of children and schools and of engaging parents and families, and communities; and

Whereas, we agree that by working collaboratively and in partnership, all children in Washington may reach their full potential and will have the best opportunity to succeed in school and life;

Now, Therefore, **Be It Resolved**, that the leaders of the Washington State Early Learning Partnership acknowledge and honor the prior work and involvement of families and children, local community groups, organizations, schools, and individuals throughout the state that have passionately and diligently moved early learning programs forward; and

Be It Further Resolved, that development of an aligned statewide early learning system requires us to continue to engage stakeholders and leaders to work together toward a common vision; and

Be It Further Resolved, that in order to assure accountability and better communicate a common vision, the leaders of the Washington State Early Learning Partnership will develop an accountability framework identifying the organizational lead for each priority area and key actions of partners, and furthermore the Partnership leaders agree to meet quarterly to assess the progress in each of the priority areas; and

Be It Further Resolved, that the Washington State Early Learning Partnership defines "lead responsibility" to mean convening interested parties, including but not limited to parents, early learning and K-12 professionals, and the primary responsibility for document production; and

Be It Finally Resolved, that key roles of partners will include participation of staff from each agency to support development and assure alignment of each priority area with programs and resources to ensure the advancement of a seamless, learner-focused, world-class early learning system in Washington State.

Signed now this day, August 11, 2009



Dr. Bette Hyde
Director, Department of Early Learning



Randy Dorn
State Superintendent of Public Instruction



Nina Auerbach
President and CEO, Thrive by Five Washington

Appendix Q: Comparison of Membership: State ELAC Legislation and Federal Head Start Act of 2007

Early Learning Advisory Council- Membership (5389 SL)	Head Start Act of 2007
Overarching Guidance: “(3) The council shall include diverse, statewide representation 18 from public, nonprofit, and for-profit entities. Its membership shall 19 reflect regional, racial, and cultural diversity to adequately represent the needs of all children and families in the state.”	Overarching Guidance: “(B) The Governor may designate an existing entity in the State to serve as the State Advisory Council, and shall appoint representatives to the State Advisory Council at the Governor’s discretion. In designating an existing entity, the Governor shall take steps to ensure that its membership includes, to the extent possible, representatives consistent with subparagraph (C).”
Membership Guidance: Not more than 23 members	Membership Guidance: “(C) Members of the State Advisory Council shall include, to the maximum extent possible—” (a representative of the following)
Chairs: Co-chaired by one representative of a state agency and one nongovernmental member, to be elected by the council for two-year terms.	Chairs: NA
Terms: (4) Councilmembers shall serve two-year terms. However, to stagger the terms of the council, the initial appointments for twelve of the 23 members shall be for one year. Once the initial one-year to two-year terms expire, all subsequent terms shall be for two years, with the terms expiring on June 30th of the applicable year. The terms shall be staggered in such a way that, where possible, the terms of members representing a specific group do not expire simultaneously.	Terms: NA
Membership	Membership
DEL (Gov. Appt.)	Agency responsible for child care
OSPI (Gov. Appt.)	State educational agency
Higher Education Coordinating Board & State Board of Community and Technical Colleges (Gov. Appt.)	Institutions of higher education in the State
7 leaders in early childhood education in one or more areas such as: the K-12 System, <u>family day care and child care centers</u> with four or more of the 7 governor’s appointments made as follows:	Local providers of early childhood education and development services
1. A representative of a head start, early head start, migrant/seasonal head start, or tribal head start program;	Head Start agencies located in the State, including migrant and seasonal Head Start programs and Indian Head Start programs

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Early Learning Advisory Council- Membership (5389 SL)	Head Start Act of 2007
2. The head start state collaboration office director or the director's designee;	State Director of Head Start Collaboration
3. A representative of the state agency responsible for programs under section 619 or part C of the federal individuals with disabilities education act	State agency responsible for programs under section 619 or part C of the Individuals with Disabilities Education Act (20 U.S.C. 1419, 1431 et seq.);
4. A representative of a local education agency	Local educational agencies
DSHS & DOH (Gov. Appt.)	State agency responsible for health or mental health care
OFM (Gov. Appt.)	Other entities determined to be relevant by the Governor
<u>Representative designated by Sovereign Tribal Governments</u>	
2 members of the house of representatives one from each caucus (House of Representatives Appt.)	
2 members of the Senate one from each caucus (Senate Appt.)	
2 parents, one of whom serves on the Departments Parent Advisory Group (Gov. Appt.)	
1 representative of the public private partnership (Thrive By Five) (Thrive Board Appt.)	
1 representative from the WA federation of independent schools (WFIS Appt?)	
Washington ELAC Legislation: Council Roles	Federal Head Start Act: Council Roles
Analysis: Washington State Early Learning Advisory Council legislation contains general language concerning ELAC roles. Each of the roles contained in the Head Start Act could fall within Washington's more general guidance.	Analysis: The Head Start Act of 2007 contains specific functions each of which could accomplished within Washington State's more general guidance.
<u>Roles Language from Legislation:</u> Sec. 2. RCW 43.215.090 and 2010 c 234 s 3 and 2010 c 12 s 1 are each reenacted and amended to read as follows: (1) The early learning advisory council is established to advise the department on statewide early learning issues that would build a comprehensive system of quality early learning programs and services for Washington's children and families by assessing needs and the availability of services, aligning resources, developing plans for data collection and professional development of early childhood educators, and establishing key performance measures. (2) The council shall work in conjunction with the department to develop a statewide early learning plan that guides the department in promoting alignment of private and public sector actions, objectives, and resources, and	<u>Roles Language from Legislation:</u> The State Advisory Council shall, in addition to any responsibilities assigned to the Council by the Governor of the State-- <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • conduct a periodic statewide needs assessment concerning the quality and availability of early childhood education and development programs and services for children from birth to school entry, including an assessment of the availability of high-quality pre-kindergarten services for low-income children in the State; • identify opportunities for, and barriers to, collaboration and coordination among Federally-funded and State-funded child development, child care, and early childhood education programs and services, including collaboration and coordination among State agencies responsible for

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Washington ELAC Legislation: Council Roles	Federal Head Start Act: Council Roles
<p>ensuring school readiness.</p>	<p>administering such programs;</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • develop recommendations for increasing the overall participation of children in existing Federal, State, and local child care and early childhood education programs, including outreach to underrepresented and special populations; • develop recommendations regarding the establishment of a unified data collection system for public early childhood education and development programs and services throughout the State; • develop recommendations regarding statewide professional development and career advancement plans for early childhood educators in the State; • assess the capacity and effectiveness of 2- and 4-year public and private institutions of higher education in the State toward supporting the development of early childhood educators, including the extent to which such institutions have in place articulation agreements, professional development and career advancement plans, and practice or internships for students to spend time in a Head Start or prekindergarten program; and make recommendations for improvements in State early learning standards and undertake efforts to develop high-quality comprehensive early learning standards, as appropriate. <p>(ii) The State Advisory Council shall hold public hearings and provide an opportunity for public comment on the activities described in clause</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • The State Advisory Council shall submit a statewide strategic report addressing the activities described in clause (i) to the State Director of Head Start Collaboration and the Governor of the State.