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State Advisory Councils: Creating Systems of Early Education and Care

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Overview of State Advisory Councils and Other Collaborative Groups

Advisory Councils for Early Childhood Education and Care in Four States

In 2007, Congress approved legislation requiring each state to create or designate a “state advisory council” to build a statewide system of early education and care for children. This policy review outlines the new requirement, profiles four states and their system-building activities, and makes recommendations on next steps to create a dynamic, integrated system of services for the nation’s youngest learners.

Recent information about children’s development and learning underscores the importance of high-quality early education and care. Research has revealed overwhelming evidence that young children are learning from their earliest months and years. We know that high-quality educational experiences have a positive impact on learning in later years. In addition, research has shown that young children who live in circumstances that increase their risk of school failure are much more likely to be successful in school if they participate in high-quality early learning programs.

As the nation looks to its future in a global society, especially to its need for an educated and skilled workforce, economists have also calculated the benefits of increased investments in early education. Their findings show a greater likelihood that young people will become economic and social contributors to society; that federal, state, and local governments will be able to reduce investments in remediation, incarceration, and welfare; and that a better-educated workforce will be able to support the nation’s continuing economic growth.

As information about the importance of high-quality early education and care has grown so too have federal, state, and local government investments in early childhood programs. Key investments aim to increase the quality of and access to early education and care; expand access to healthcare for low-income children; allow Head Start programs to serve children

A Head Start on Coordination

In a 2007 survey by the National Governors Association Center for Best Practices, 31 states reported having at least one early childhood advisory council designed to increase coordination among early education and care programs.

from families with slightly higher incomes while retaining priority for the neediest children; and expand access to high-quality, voluntary pre-kindergarten programs. Each of these approaches—and many more—has developed separately, with program-specific regulations, funding streams, delivery systems, eligibility requirements, professional development systems, and accountability measures. As programs grow in number and complexity, states and localities are challenged to create the greatest value for limited public dollars while expanding access and ensuring program quality to create the greatest benefit for young children.

State leaders increasingly understand the complexities of these programs and the challenges of coordinating them. Many states have created statewide advisory councils to assess needs, increase communication and collaboration across programs and state agencies, and set priorities for future state

action. In a 2007 survey by the National Governors Association Center for Best Practices, 31 states reported having at least one early childhood advisory council designed to increase coordination among early education and care programs. Most of these councils also seek to coordinate with health and mental health services, home visiting, early intervention, and special education programs, as well as with the Early Childhood Comprehensive Systems Initiative of the federal Maternal and Child Health Bureau.

In the Improving Head Start for School Readiness Act of 2007, the federal government recognized the benefit of coordinated statewide approaches. The act includes a requirement for each state's governor to convene a State Advisory Council for Early Childhood Education and Care (hereafter "Council") to undertake activities aimed at creating a statewide strategy to improve quality and access in programs serving young children.

This paper explores the requirements for forming Councils, the work to be undertaken by these groups, and how they may work in concert with other state-level collaborative bodies. It also provides brief stories about the origins and progress of collaboration to improve early education and care systems and services in four states, proposes some lessons from this state work, and provides some models and recommendations for strategic thinking and action to make the most of the opportunity created by the formation of the Councils.

State Advisory Councils: An Opportunity for States

Under the provisions of the Head Start act, the governor of each state is required to designate or appoint a State Advisory Council on Early Childhood Education and Care. States may choose to modify the membership of an existing group to meet the membership definitions established by Congress or to form an entirely new Council. This provision creates an opportunity for states to review existing councils and collaborative bodies and create a single group to lead the state in moving toward a system of education and related supports for young children and their families.

Councils are charged with:

- Conducting a periodic statewide assessment of the quality and availability of early education and development services for children from birth to school entry;
- Identifying opportunities for collaboration and coordination among entities carrying out federally funded and state-funded child development, child care, and early education programs;
- Developing recommendations for increasing the participation of children in existing federal, state, and local early education and care programs;
- Developing recommendations for establishing a unified data collection system for publicly funded programs offering early education, development, and services;

- Developing recommendations for a statewide professional development and career plan for early education and care;
- Assessing the capacity and effectiveness of two- and four-year public and private institutions of higher education toward supporting the development of early childhood educators;
- Making recommendations for improvements in state early learning standards, as appropriate; and
- Carrying out additional tasks as assigned by the governor.

Councils are required to hold public hearings with opportunities for public comment on their deliberations and to submit a statewide strategic report to the governor and the state director of Head Start collaboration that includes the assessment and recommendations.

Availability of Startup Grants

The Head Start act includes a provision for one-time startup grants to states to support plans developed by their Councils. Each grant is to be at least \$500,000. The federal funding, which can be used over a three-year period, requires a 70 percent match from funds provided by the state.

States must submit an application in order to be considered for the grants, which are to be awarded competitively. To apply for funding under this provision, states will need to submit:

- A statewide strategic report on the opportunities and barriers to collaboration and coordination among federally funded and state-funded early education and care programs, including collaboration and coordination among state agencies responsible for administering the programs;
- A description, for each fiscal year, of how the state will make effective use of funds available under this provision, along with state funding, to create a system of early education and care consistent with the recommendations of the statewide strategic report;
- A description of the state's early learning standards and the state's goals for increasing the number of children who enter kindergarten ready to learn;
- Information about the agency or interagency body and individual designated to carry out the proposed activities; and
- A description of how the state plans to sustain the activities beyond the grant period.

The provision also stipulates that grants will be available only in years when Congress provides sufficient funds for a number of other priority programs in the 2007 Head Start legislation. A complicated funding formula allocates the overall annual appropriation for Head Start programs and determines priorities for funding. In general, the amount of funding available to support the Councils will depend on the total appropriation made for Head Start in a given fiscal year and a series of other "reservations" of funds for specific purposes. Unlike essential program activities such as maintaining the prior-year funding levels and providing staff with training and technical assistance, funding for the Councils may not be allocated for a given fiscal year if the total annual appropriation is not sufficient to cover essential expenses.

The final appropriation for Head Start included in the Consolidated Appropriations Act of 2008 does not include sufficient funding to make startup grants available in FY08. All states, however, are required to form Councils and conduct the activities outlined in the legislation. States should begin work to fulfill the application requirements so that they are well positioned to apply for startup grants if funding becomes available for FY09 and future years.

The Work of State Advisory Councils

Councils have a comprehensive mission that cuts across state agencies and programs and connects to the work of private sector funders and providers. To be effective in carrying out these broad responsibilities and to take advantage of the opportunity to create a comprehensive approach to early education and care, Councils should look to the expertise and experiences of state staff, nonprofit organizations, and members of the public and should draw on information from many communities and constituencies.

In a majority of states, collaborative work is already taking place among agencies and programs that serve young children. In creating the Councils, states will want to review and recognize the successes of existing collaborative groups, while broadening their mission and elevating their role to create a quality system of education and care for all young children.

Relationship to Other Federally Mandated Collaborative Groups

The Councils are similar in some ways to other state advisory groups, to other collaborative efforts created in federal legislation, and to requirements for collaboration prescribed in the role of the Head Start collaboration director and in the Maternal and Child Health Services Comprehensive Systems grant program. These groups include:

The Early Childhood Education Professional Development and Career Task Force. The Task Force is charged with developing and strengthening training opportunities for early childhood professionals, including those who already work in the field and those who are preparing to enter it. Its membership includes state agencies, institutions of higher education, and early care and education providers. The 2008 Higher Education Amendments require that the Task Force align its activities and recommendations with those set by the Council, establishing a formal relationship between the two groups. The Task Force can provide valuable contributions to the work of the Council, especially to its recommendations for a statewide professional development and career plan and to its assessment of the capacity and effectiveness of higher education institutions in supporting the development of early childhood educators.

A State Interagency Coordinating Council. The Coordinating Council, mandated by the Individuals with Disabilities in Education Act, brokers relationships, agreements, and responsibilities across agencies that serve infants and toddlers with disabilities. While representation from the state agency providing services to young children with disabilities is required on the Council, the Council has the broader task of considering needs and strengthening services and supports for all young children.

A Head Start collaboration group or coordinating council. While not required by the Head Start statute, many states have formed such a body. The state director of Head Start collaboration will be a member of the Council, and the Council must submit its statewide strategic report to the collaboration director, as well as the governor. The role of the Council, however, goes beyond Head Start or any other single program, whether federally or state-funded, creating an opportunity for states to develop comprehensive systems of early education and care.

The Early Childhood Comprehensive Systems (ECCS) Initiative. ECCS was implemented in 2003 by the Maternal and Child Health Bureau. Since that time, 49 states and the District of Columbia have participated in the grant program, receiving funds to develop a comprehensive system for youth that addresses five critical components: access to health care and medical homes, social-emotional development and mental health, early care and education, parenting education, and family support. Nearly all grantees have developed state-level plans for systems development. ECCS grants support many existing statewide collaborative efforts in early education and care and could prove a significant source of support for federally mandated Councils. Beyond financial support, Councils should draw from information and lessons from current ECCS grantees. *For more information about the ECCS Initiative, visit: www.state-eccs.org.*

While their primary objectives are narrower and targeted to specific programs, each of these advisory groups has strategic contributions to make to the overall goal of the Councils, i.e. to align and expand high-quality services and programs that serve young children. In carrying out their work in the advisory groups, members have developed collective knowledge, skills, and expertise to contribute to the work of Councils.

Eight Lessons from Collaborative Work in States

Progress already made in a number of states provides important lessons for others as they create or designate Councils. (See Appendix B for more detailed histories of the states from which these lessons are drawn.)

1. Begin with a broad vision.

The mission of Councils crosses programs, age groups, and settings to create a system that spans the developmental period from birth until entry into kindergarten. While individual state agencies or Council members may have expertise and responsibility for specific programs and/or populations, the group is charged with thinking more broadly and creating a comprehensive vision and roadmap for the future. Although the provision describing the composition and responsibilities of the Councils emanates from Head Start legislation, the mission of the Councils goes well beyond Head Start: to create systems that include all children, regardless of income levels or special needs. Governors and other state officials must act on this broader vision in making appointments and connecting the work of Councils to other state-level efforts.

In Illinois, for example, the Early Learning Council built a broad-based collaborative approach by starting with individuals' key beliefs about early education and care, rather than creating a blueprint for policies and programs. By articulating and clarifying key beliefs, members made sure the work of the Council would be based on deeply held and shared values.

Embracing a broad vision for all children rather than focusing on a few programs may require the Council to move slowly at first, as individual members expand their knowledge

about aspects of the system that were previously unfamiliar to them and about working in a collaborative environment. As members articulate a broad vision and examine existing practice in light of that vision, they gain greater perspective on the issues and develop shared knowledge upon which to base their actions.

2. Cultivate champions.

Champions from multiple constituencies within the state become the visible representatives of the Council's vision and mission. Elected government officials provide name recognition and the opportunity to influence political decision making, and champions from other sectors, including business, nonprofit, law enforcement, and advocacy organizations, can build broad public support for the issue.

In Illinois, business leader and strategic philanthropist Irving Harris brought his passion for improving the lives of young children to the forefront, meeting with business associates, policymakers, practitioners, academics, and other community members. Harris provided both financial and intellectual leadership to institutions dedicated to the wellbeing of young children, including the Erikson Institute, the Ounce of Prevention Fund, ZERO TO THREE, and the Yale Child Study Center, and influenced the McCormick Foundation to focus its investments on the wellbeing of infants. Harris's contributions are reflected in the strength and diversity of nonprofit and advocacy organizations in Illinois and in the strong role these organizations play in the Council, which is co-chaired by the president of the Ounce of Prevention Fund.

The Nebraska Children and Families Foundation plays a key role in communications about early childhood issues and policies in the state. At the request of the Early Childhood Interagency Coordinating

Council, the Foundation disseminated an analysis that demonstrated the positive economic impact of the state's early care and education industry. The Foundation also led a campaign to create the Nebraska Early Childhood Education Endowment Fund, which focuses on children from birth through age three. A successful ballot initiative approved the use of state funds as principal for the endowment, with a commitment from philanthropists to expand the endowment with private investments. Key members of the Endowment Fund board, including the vice president of a national foundation and a prominent advocate for young children, are visible champions for the effort.

3. Seek broad support and state legislation

Elected leadership changes over time. Initiatives that are closely identified with leaders from one party or one individual are often eliminated or reduced in scope and influence when new leaders take office.

In states such as Illinois, Nebraska, and New Mexico, where the legislatures passed statutes creating and defining the role of a broad-based collaborative group similar to a Council, groups have been able to make progress over time, often revisiting issues and pushing for solutions despite changes in the political climate. Defining these collaborative groups in statute insulates them from political changes, providing them with some degree of permanency and enabling deeper learning and a more thorough, strategic approach to issues. Similarly, in Wisconsin where the governor and state superintendent of public instruction are independently elected, a history of collaboration to support young children has allowed the state's Early Childhood Collaborating Partners to develop strong roots.

Support across the political spectrum is built with attention to research and data that matter to individual constituencies. Business leaders,

for example, may be more responsive to research about the economic impact of quality early childhood programs while law enforcement groups can be engaged through information about the impact of quality programs on reducing later involvement with the juvenile justice system.

4. Build on successes; don't reinvent the wheel.

Every state has experienced some success in collaboration through ongoing work in Head Start collaboration and ECCS grants as well as other work unique to each state. Individuals inside and outside state government are familiar with the details of funding streams, program requirements, and the way that issues play out in local communities. These ongoing successes can be helpful in building a knowledge base of needs and assets across the state, rather than initiating an entirely new collaborative effort to respond to the legislative requirements.

New Mexico's Child Development Board, for example, has operated since 1989 with responsibility for professional development and for developing state-funded early childhood programs. Because of its long history, its knowledge of the needs of young children, and its success in implementation, the board has been able to provide recommendations to guide current efforts to expand state-funded pre-k programs.

Some states have established several different collaborative groups, from children's cabinets to single-program advisory or coordinating groups such as a Head Start collaboration council. High-level officials, including cabinet members, can become advocates for broad policy change while agency staff members contribute expertise to get the job done. In developing the Councils, states will want to review the successes of existing collaborative groups and develop a structure, including committees, that best taps expertise at all

levels and from a variety of constituencies to help the state move toward creating an early childhood system.

5. Nurture strong relationships between individuals.

In collaborative groups, members develop personal relationships that enable them to tackle tough and even divisive issues. Understanding an individual's life experiences and values can shed light on the way that person approaches issues and challenges and can help the group to break through differences and reach agreements.

In Eau Claire, Wisconsin, a collaborative group supported by the statewide partnership used a small planning grant to develop all-day retreat sessions to enable local practitioners, school district personnel, and other staff members to work through the challenges of expanding access to *Four-Year-Old Kindergarten (4K)* programs. Longer work sessions and shared meals provided opportunities to strengthen relationships.

6. Balance collaborative leadership with results.

Collaborative groups such as a Council require strong leadership that balances the needs for a group process and relevant content expertise with requirements for the Council's focus and products. Councils—and committees within them—often function well with co-chairs from different constituencies such as a state agency and a nonprofit organization.

In Nebraska, the steering committee for the Early Childhood Interagency Coordinating Council works with a facilitator to help develop the agenda for meetings. This ensures that attention is paid to the collaborative process and allows the chair to contribute content expertise. In Illinois, the Early Learning Council involved 46 members appointed by the governor and approximately 200 subcommittee members from many constituencies and areas of expertise. This

broad representation with leadership shared by the governor's office and the advocacy community provided momentum and a sense of shared identity for the work of the group.

To ensure attention to the needs of children, some states have created a new department such as a Department of Children and Families and located relevant programs in that entity. Bringing the programs together in a single agency structure creates a foundation for greater accountability. In the early stages of creating a new department, however, some states are finding that the challenges of developing structures and procedures can overwhelm the collaborative work and that it can be very challenging to bring together in one department all of the programs that support young children. Regardless of governance structure, there is always a need to share information and coordinate efforts across divisions, programs and agencies.

7. Stimulate and respond to local innovation and lessons.

Councils are responsible for developing effective solutions for communities across the state. They must pay attention to the state's context and organizational structure to develop two-way communication with local practitioners and leaders, learning from local practice and providing resources to advance access to high-quality education and care.

Each meeting of Nebraska's coordinating group opens with a story of a family that highlights issues currently being considered. In Wisconsin, where counties and communities are deeply involved in developing local implementation strategies, state agency staff combined funding from five different sources to fund collaboration coaches who support local work and assist communities in bringing together their own funding sources to expand services for children.

The New Mexico Board on Children and Families has created a system to ensure quality and allow flexibility in delivery of professional development. Uniform content for all public higher education institutions ensures that early childhood program staff members across the state have access to the same high-quality educational opportunities. Individuals can begin their studies at one institution and continue at another; enroll in online courses; or combine online enrollment with more traditional classes to meet their personal and professional needs.

8. Build broad public awareness and support.

The public's perceptions of and willingness to support investments in early education and care play important roles in creating stronger systems in states. The Councils are required to hold hearings including public comment and can also connect with the community in other ways. Many advisory councils work with advocacy groups to build public awareness and support for early childhood issues.

In Illinois, leaders of advocacy groups connected to the Early Learning Council were knowledgeable about the needs of families with young children and were able to use their own political connections to bring issues to the attention of legislators in their districts. In Nebraska, the Early Childhood Interagency Coordinating Council contracted with the Nebraska Children and Families Foundation to conduct a public awareness campaign about the importance of early childhood programs. As public support grew, the legislature moved to create a public-private partnership to fund an early childhood endowment.

Recommendations for All Stakeholders

In forming a Council, a state has an opportunity to build early childhood systems that create and advance a comprehensive agenda for young children. Pre-K Now recommends that states make the most of this opportunity by moving quickly to form Councils. Effective Councils will draw from the experiences of similar state-level groups as well as good practice in related fields.

Specifically, Pre-K Now recommends:

Governors

- Use the opportunity created by the 2007 Head Start legislation to form a broad-based Council that builds upon existing knowledge and collaborative skills. Review the responsibilities and membership of existing collaborative groups to determine whether one could be adapted to fulfill the role of the Council.
- Participate—or designate a high-level representative to participate—in the Council, elevating the status of the group.
- Use the “bully pulpit” to advocate for the Council and for a statewide system of early education and care.
- Allocate state funding to enable the Council to function effectively while pursuing financial support from the federal government, philanthropies, advocates, and community leaders.

State legislators

- Develop and approve legislation that fully describes the role of the Council in the state and appropriates state funding for its work.
- Serve officially or informally on the Council.

State agency heads with responsibility for early education and care programs

- Review existing structures and collaborative groups at the state level to clarify their responsibilities and relationships to the Council and create an aligned system with clear goals.
- Designate staff with experience and expertise in systems building to serve in a resource capacity to the Council.
- Create short- and medium-term goals for change in statewide policies and practices that serve as benchmarks for the state’s progress.
- Serve as an advocate for innovative local practices, providing support for their work and bringing their successes and challenges to the attention of the Council.
- Involve advocacy groups, providers, parents, and citizens in the work of the Council.

Local and municipal governments (including cities, counties, and school districts)

- Seek representation on the Council and its committees.
- Engage other local leaders, including school superintendents, elected officials, community leaders, practitioners, and advocates, in creating a system of early education and care for all young children in the community and educate them about the importance of the Council.
- Bring local innovation to the attention of the Council.

Parents, practitioners, and advocacy groups

- Seek representation on the Council and its committees.
- Build public awareness and support for the Council's role in developing a system of early education and care in the state.
- Hold state leadership accountable for ensuring the Council's effectiveness.

U.S. Congress

- Provide sufficient appropriations to fully finance the provision of federal grants for Councils, as authorized in the 2007 Head Start reauthorization.
- Request that the Government Accountability Office report periodically on the progress and effectiveness of the Councils.

U.S. Secretaries of Education and Health and Human Services (HHS)

- Review regulations governing the implementation of programs funded by key early childhood funding streams such as Head Start, the Child Care and Development Block Grant program, and the Temporary Assistance for Needy Families program to provide appropriate flexibility in the use of those funds to states seeking to improve coordination.

Establish a procedure for the secretaries of HHS and Education to consider feedback and recommendations from the Councils regarding the need for greater flexibility in the use of funds awarded through early childhood funding streams. This procedure should provide for joint consideration of relevant regulations by the secretaries of HHS and Education in order to eliminate overlapping regulations that govern early childhood funding.

Pre-K Now

Pre-K Now collaborates with advocates and policymakers to lead a movement for high-quality, voluntary pre-kindergarten for all three and four year olds. Our vision is a nation in which every child enters kindergarten prepared to succeed.

Pre-K Now is a project of The Pew Charitable Trusts and other funders to advance high-quality pre-k for all children. The findings and opinions expressed in this report do not necessarily reflect the views of the Trusts.

Appendix A: Resources for Creating and Sustaining a System for Young Children

To make significant progress, Councils need leadership that will define issues broadly and support from elected officials to stay the course. Without high-level commitment, Councils could fail to have a significant impact like some similar collaborative groups that have come before them.

The newly formed Councils can benefit from an expanding array of resources, including publications, successful models, and support from national organizations, in developing the work in states. Some of these resources are described below.

Developing a Vision

Councils set the stage for success from the start by conducting an assessment of the needs of young children in their state. An assessment capable of supporting the work of a statewide system should be both:

- Comprehensive—inclusive of all elements of an early childhood system; and
- Thorough—capable of illuminating the differences among populations of children, including major ethnic and economic groups within the state; different geographic areas; and children with disabilities as well as those with typical development.

“Common Vision, Different Paths,” a 2007 publication of Pre-K Now and ZERO TO THREE, presents a comprehensive vision for an early childhood system. Adapted from a vision developed by the Early Childhood System Builders’ Workgroup, a group of national organizations providing technical assistance to state leaders on building early

childhood systems, “Common Vision” conceptualizes a comprehensive system that includes a broad array of high-quality, accessible, and affordable programs and services for young children and their families, including:

- Physical and mental health services, such as:
 - Health insurance coverage
 - Prenatal care
 - Primary and preventive care, such as well-child visits
 - Guidance for parents to support children’s healthy development
 - Developmental screenings to identify physical and behavioral needs
- Family support services, such as:
 - Parenting education
 - Economic supports to promote financial self-sufficiency
 - Supportive work and family policies such as paid family leave
 - Special supports for families in crisis
- Early care and education, such as:
 - Quality child care programs in a variety of settings
 - Early Head Start and Head Start
 - Quality pre-k for all offered in diverse settings
 - Early identification and services for children with special needs.

For a copy of “Common Vision, Different Paths,” visit:

www.preknow.org/documents/CommonVision_Dec2007.pdf.

Ensuring Accountability

The National Early Childhood Accountability Task Force has issued recommendations for developing a comprehensive assessment to improve the performance of early education programs. The Task Force, which was created and supported by the Foundation for Child Development, the Joyce Foundation, and The Pew Charitable Trusts, and managed by The Pew Charitable Trusts, recommends that states:

- Develop a unified system of early education that includes a single, coherent system of standards, assessments, data, and professional development efforts across all programs and funding streams;
- Align high-quality and comprehensive standards, curriculum, instruction, and assessments as a continuum from pre-k through grade three;
- Assure that all child and program assessments use valid and reliable instruments that are well suited for their intended purposes;
- Support the full inclusion of all children in accountability and improvement efforts, including English Language Learners and children with disabilities; and
- Provide adequate resources to enable programs to meet performance standards and to support accurate, credible, and useful assessments and effective program-improvement efforts.

In 2008-09, the Council of Chief State School Officers, with funding from The Pew Charitable Trusts, will use the Task Force's findings to help states document and strengthen early childhood education program performance. *For more about the Task Force, visit:*
www.pewtrusts.org/our_work.aspx?category=102.

Learning from Successes

State Councils can also learn from successful state and local models, including the United Way of America's Success By 6™ efforts, the Smart Start initiative in North Carolina, and the Build Initiative—all of which have been especially effective in building and sustaining local partnerships that ensure young children enter school ready to learn.

Success By 6 (www.unitedway.org/sb6).

Formed and operated with the help of local United Ways in more than 350 communities across the country, Success By 6™ coalitions make up the largest network of community initiatives increasing awareness and quality of early care and educational opportunities for children from birth through age six.

The national United Way provides a strategic framework for coalitions, but business, government, nonprofit, and education leaders in each community develop their own partnerships and strategies. For the past 17 years, coalitions have changed the way many communities connect around issues of early learning and care.

United Way of America is taking the Success By 6 framework to scale and working to bring local lessons in collaboration to bear on national early learning policies, practices, and priorities. Councils, too, have much to learn from the long-term relationships that have been built in communities through these coalitions.

Smart Start (www.smartstart-nc.org).

In 1993, the North Carolina state legislature allocated \$20 million to establish Smart Start, an initiative with a mission to ensure young children enter school healthy and ready to succeed. The program has grown rapidly, reflecting its effectiveness and popularity. This year, \$203.6 million in state funds and another 10 percent from private partners help Smart Start maintain its nationally recognized success in meeting its goal.

Smart Start funds are allocated to 78 local nonprofit organizations, which assess local needs and provide resources and programs to meet them. The North Carolina Partnership for Children, Inc., a state-level nonprofit group, provides initiative oversight and technical assistance to local organizations. Most of the funding is allocated to improve access and quality of affordable child care with a significant portion dedicated to health and developmental services for young children and programs for families.

The Smart Start National Technical Assistance Center, created in 2001, helps leaders from other states develop similar early childhood initiatives. Councils can take advantage of the experience of the Smart Start initiative and the impact it has made locally, statewide, and nationally.

Build Initiative (www.buildinitiative.org).

The Early Childhood Funders' Collaborative, which includes 16 national and local foundations, created the Build Initiative to help states develop systems that meet the needs of young children and their families. To date, the initiative has funded systems development work in five states—Illinois, Minnesota, New Jersey, Ohio, and Pennsylvania—providing \$350,000 to each state for an 18-to-24-month planning phase followed by ongoing implementation grants ranging from \$100,000 to \$200,000. Build Initiative grantees have developed and are being measured against benchmarks in infrastructure, development, quality improvement, evaluation, financing, and public engagement. State-level implementation teams include a diverse group of stakeholders and are managed by staff from a designated nonprofit organization. The state work and national initiative continue to be evaluated and have come to serve as a resource to other national organizations.

Support from State and National Partners

Over the coming months, key players in the Councils will have opportunities to learn from each other and from the involvement of national organizations.

The National Governors Association Center for Best Practices is planning to develop an issue brief based on the results of its Survey on Early Childhood Advisory Councils, to conduct a series of conference calls to respond to the issues and challenges states are facing in developing the Councils, and to provide \$10,000 in flexible funding to each of eight states for use in developing their Councils. States involved will share their learning at a meeting in mid-2008.

In addition to disseminating this report, Pre-K Now will reach out to advocacy organizations and others in the states to encourage their involvement in forming and shaping the work of the Councils in their state.

Appendix B: Four States' Experiences Developing Statewide Collaborative Efforts

Collaborative bodies designed to coordinate and advance priority investments in early education and care, similar to the federally mandated Councils, are now operating in a majority of the states. Each of these collaborative groups is unique, reflecting the state's context, needs, available resources, and involvement of leaders from government and the private sector. They range in focus from very narrow to very broad, encompassing "children's cabinets," P-20 councils (pre-k through college graduation), early learning councils, and other configurations.

This section includes brief examples from four states where such collaboration is occurring, highlights the successes and ongoing challenges, and provides some insights into the way these groups are organized and the work they take on. Each of these state collaborative groups includes some elements of an effective Council:

- Many include high-level agency representation as well as membership from local communities and diverse organizations outside state government;
- Several are established by statute, providing them with autonomy and continuity; and
- A number have allocated resources for facilitation to help the group move forward.

While the Illinois Early Learning Council most nearly matches the Council's charge and composition, each of these groups could be modified or expanded to serve as the Council—a more promising practice than establishing an entirely new group.

Reimagine Instead of Reinvent

Each of these groups could be modified or expanded to serve as the Council—a more promising practice than establishing an entirely new group.

Creating a Big Tent in Illinois

Illinois' commitment to young children has grown over many years, with bipartisan support from several governors. Engaged philanthropists, active advocacy organizations, and parents and providers all participated in the process to build a system of early education and care. Philanthropic organizations had long provided capacity-building support for nonprofit organizations and for bringing new voices, including diverse ethnic groups, leaders in law enforcement, and leaders in professional development, to the table.

In 2003, the governor signed legislation establishing the Illinois Early Learning Council, charged with creating a voluntary "preschool for all" plan. The council was large and inclusive, reflecting the high level of interest and commitment in the state. It included 46 appointed members and 200 subcommittee members and was co-chaired by the governor's former director of education reform and the head of a respected nonprofit organization.

Illinois' big tent approach was key to moving forward in a large, complex, statewide context and was based on a shared commitment to five core principles:

- Supporting the optimal development of all young children from birth through age five;
- Aligning services with research findings on the components of high quality;
- Focusing first (but not exclusively) on young children at greatest risk of poor outcomes;
- Addressing all aspects of early childhood development, including social and emotional development; and
- Building an early childhood system with a strong infrastructure, not just programs.

Members agreed that funding for pre-k services would be linked to funding for preventive programs for infants and toddlers, providing support for a diverse delivery system that would meet the needs of a broad range of families and communities. The result: the Preschool for All legislation, outlining a framework for a system of education and care for young children.

In 2006, the Illinois legislature passed the Preschool for All legislation, which promises to make voluntary, high-quality pre-k a reality for all three and four year olds in the state and also funds a wide range of child development services for infants and toddlers at risk of school failure. The landmark legislation was the culmination of a long history of collaboration in a big state with sizable urban, suburban, and rural communities and many interest groups.

Sustaining Collaboration in Nebraska

Nebraska's Early Childhood Interagency Coordinating Council, created in statute in 2000, brought together separate interagency councils focused on child care, on young children with disabilities, and on the Head Start program. The group—with membership similar to the federally mandated Councils—maintains standing committees to identify and reduce service gaps and barriers as well as committees for legislation and communications. State staff members serve as resources to the council, whose members are appointed by the governor.

In its early years, Nebraska's council worked to help individual members broaden their perspective to include all children, not only those with disabilities. To ensure an inclusive focus and process, the group contracts with a facilitator to help plan and conduct the meetings. Each meeting begins with a story about issues confronting children, families, and the agencies that serve them. To support staff in all parts of this largely rural state, a regional system for professional development makes training opportunities available to educators in all types of programs.

The council works to help local communities apply what it has learned about collaboration and partnership. The state supports pre-k for four year olds—taught by certified teachers—through its school funding formula at a level of 60 percent of the funding it provides for children in the elementary grades. To offer programs in communities, school districts must enter into partnerships with other providers such as Head Start agencies. The statewide group provides technical assistance to create these local partnerships.

“We are constantly learning how important it is to have a vehicle for communication,” says one council member. “As funding streams in many cases are shrinking, there is more protection of resources. We have good relationships at the state level that can help the local collaboratives work through tough issues.”

Serving New Mexico's Diverse Communities

New Mexico's programs for young children serve a diverse population scattered across a large area. The state ranks fifth in area among the states but 36th in population and has large percentages of Latino and American Indian children. With these facts in mind, the state works to develop collaboration across agencies and levels of government and to ensure high-quality programs are delivered in culturally and linguistically responsive settings.

The state's Child Development Board, created in statute in 1989, supports the advancement of state-funded pre-k programs, infant-toddler services, and a nationally recognized professional development system. By 1995, the professional development framework was in place, creating a comprehensive system with multiple levels of certification and providing uniform course content and requirements for early childhood training programs across the state's higher education institutions. The framework, which has been revised and refined over time, is competency based, using standards from existing programs such as Head Start, and enables staff to enroll in courses in any higher education institution or online. Faculty representatives from all institutions in the state meet monthly, building relationships and continuing to refine the framework. The board also developed a strategic plan for a comprehensive early learning system for the state and that work informed the design of *New Mexico PreK*, which provides voluntary, high-quality pre-k programs in community settings and schools across the state.

With leadership from the governor and lieutenant governor, New Mexico has also developed a children's cabinet, with a broad mission to establish and expand the state's comprehensive policies that impact children and youth. The Children's Cabinet, which consists of 11 cabinet secretaries and other governmental representatives, is taking a leading role in expanding *New Mexico PreK*.

Supporting Local Leaders in Wisconsin

Wisconsin has a long history of collaboration in early education and care. The state's Early Childhood Collaborating Partners group brings together the Birth to Three program, the ECCS grant, Head Start collaboration work, Wisconsin infant mental health program, state-funded pre-k programs (called *4K* in Wisconsin), and the Children's Trust Fund. Together, these programs have responsibility for the Early Childhood Comprehensive Systems areas of early care and education, health and medical homes, mental health and social-emotional development, parent education, and family support. The group now includes 42 individuals from multiple state agencies.

Because many services in Wisconsin are provided by the state's 72 counties and by towns and school districts, the statewide partners group works to support collaboration at the local level. The group pooled resources from five state programs in three different departments to provide collaboration coaches who work with communities, using a funding template to help develop the best program in each location.

A more recent effort known as Forces for Fours and led by the governor and the state superintendent of public instruction is promoting community collaborations and expanding access to 4K programs through the state's general fund. Communities must develop solutions that combine funding from school districts and other providers to put 4K programs in place.

In the town of Eau Claire, members of the statewide partners group helped staff from the school district, which is also the Head Start provider, the Child Care Resource and Referral Center, and community leaders develop an early childhood initiative. Nearly 100 people worked in multiple committees for nearly five years. The local partners were successful in building a collaborative spirit and overcoming a concern that the school district would decide to monopolize the 4K program, potentially hurting the community's child care providers. During the process, a collaboration coach helped the group identify barriers and opportunities and develop solutions. State agency staff members were readily available by phone to coach and encourage local leaders. Now in its third year of operation, Eau Claire 4K operates in 22 sites, including 17 child care and preschool programs.

Wisconsin officials believe they have successfully institutionalized the practice of collaboration across programs and agencies and say they value the increased networking and communication it affords. As collaboration becomes the norm in practice, they believe they have reached a tipping point where it is no longer acceptable for programs and agencies to act alone. In 2008, the shape of collaboration in Wisconsin is likely to change as the state establishes a new Department of Children and Families that will include all federally funded and state-funded programs for children.

Resources

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Overview of State Advisory Councils and Other Federally Mandated Collaborative Groups

Legislation	Improving Head Start Act of 2007 Section 642B: State Advisory Council on Early Childhood Education and Care [Original Legislation: Head Start Act, Title VI, Subtitle A, Chapter 8, Subchapter B of the Omnibus Budget Reconciliation Act of 1981]	Higher Education Amendments of 2008 Part J: Early Childhood Education Professional Development and Career Task Force [Original legislation: Higher Education Act of 1965]	Individuals with Disabilities Education Act of 2004 Section 641: State Interagency Coordinating Council
Appointed by	Governor	Governor	Governor
General Purpose	Develop or enhance a high-quality system of early education and care.	Strengthen the early childhood education workforce through improved training and compensation.	Meet the needs of infants and toddlers with disabilities.
Duties (Excerpted from Legislation)	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Assess statewide program and service availability • Assess postsecondary education for early childhood professionals • Recommend ways to: <ul style="list-style-type: none"> – Advance professional development/ career opportunities for educators – Collect data on public services and programs – Increase participation in existing programs – Improve state early learning standards • Improve coordination between federally and state-funded child development and early education and care programs and agencies 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Survey the state’s early childhood education landscape with special attention to the demographics of early childhood professionals • Improve statewide professional development and career training programs • Align activities and recommendations with the Head Start State Advisory Council 	Help the governor-appointed lead agency to: <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Administer and monitor programs and services, including data collection and professional training • Identify and coordinate resources • Assign financial responsibility for services and activities • Resolve disputes between and within agencies

Overview of State Advisory Councils and Other Federally Mandated Collaborative Groups

continued

Council	State Advisory Council	Early Childhood Task Force	State Interagency Coordinating Council
FY08 Funding	<p>Competitive, one-time startup grants of at least \$500,000 will be awarded to eligible states. The federal share of funding is 30 percent of the total cost. States are expected to offer an additional \$1,166,666 to the activities of the Council. States wishing to apply for federal grants must submit an application and three-year implementation plan to the U.S. Secretary of Health and Human Services. No funding is available for such grants for FY08.</p>	<p>The secretary of education will award competitive, five-year grants to eligible states. Applications must include information about membership, planned activities, and other resources that will supplement the federal funds. No funding is available for FY08.</p>	
Reporting Responsibilities	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Public hearings with public testimony • Initial statewide strategic report submitted to the state director of Head Start collaboration and governor • Interim report (at 18 months) and final report at end of grant period to U.S. Secretary of Health and Human Services • State director of Head Start collaboration 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Public hearings • Continued review of plan and activities • Report to secretary of education at two-year mark 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Quarterly meetings (held publicly when possible) • Annual reports submitted to governor and U.S. Secretary of Education
Membership (Excerpted from Legislation)	<p>Representatives of:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • State agency responsible for child care • Higher education community • Local providers of early childhood education and development services • State educational agency • Local educational agencies • State agency responsible for specific programs mandated by IDEA • Head Start agencies in the state • State agency responsible for health or mental health care 	<p>Representatives of:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • State agency • Institutions of higher education • Early childhood education programs • Nonprofit early childhood organizations • Statewide early childhood workforce scholarship 	<p>Representatives of:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Head Start • State child care agency • State education agency for pre-k services • Personnel preparation • Service providers • Parents • State legislature • Agency for early intervention services • Health insurance • Office of coordinator of education of homeless children and youth • State foster care • Mental health agency