

WASHINGTON STATE AND LOCAL COORDINATION PROJECT Purpose, Parameters and Workplan

Introduction

Washington State is embarking on a process to create a state and local coordination structure which will engage a wide array of communities, individuals, sectors, and professions working to promote the early learning and development of children from prenatal to third grade. This paper is intended to assist leaders and the project consulting team in developing a common understanding of the project purposes, context and parameters established by prior decisions and guiding documents.

Background

In September 2010, Washington State released its first comprehensive 10-Year *Early Learning Plan* (ELP). Local and state partners provided input into the ELP, which serves as Washington's early learning roadmap to deliver results for young children and their families. The ELP has been designed to foster alignment and accountability across systems, sectors, organizations, funding streams and programs. Implementation of such an early learning system requires development of a statewide structure with clear and coordinated roles, responsibilities and communication among local and state partners.

To support this effort, Washington has received a federal grant for development of a state and local coordination structure (also referred to as a governance structure). Washington has many elements of such structures to work with as this effort proceeds. The *State and Local Coordination Project* was initiated in November 2011 to lead the many partners and stakeholders through the process of creating such a structure by 2013.

As described in the Collaborative Leadership and Accountability Model paper¹ prepared for the August 2011 ELAC Retreat (see http://www.del.wa.gov/publications/elac-gris/docs/WA_Collaborative_Leadership_brief.pdf), eighteen states now have state and local "early learning collaborative leadership and accountability structures" designed to afford children what they need when they need it, based on individual child and family needs and available resources. Building a coordinated continuum of services requires connecting state leaders and local communities. It requires cross-sector state and local planning, communication, coordinated action and decision-making and the use of data for continuous improvement.

States with these structures in place are realizing three types of outcomes: improvements in systems, improvements in program/service implementation, and quality and improvements in children's well being outcomes. Examples of improved outcomes include:

- The Arizona Home Visiting Agenda with a single entry point that matches families with the services that best meet their needs
- Colorado's coordinated approach to local systems assessment, strategic planning and evaluation via a cross-organization management group has resulted in an additional \$0.56 of additional local funding for every \$1.00 invested by the state collaborative partner.
- North Carolina, increased the quality of child-care for children receiving subsidies from 20% being served in 4- and 5-star rated programs to 80% of children being served in these high quality programs over ten years

The State and Local Coordination (SLC) Project

The two-fold purposes of the SLC project are to:

1. Develop a state-local early learning coordination structure that provides consistent opportunities for local and state voices to inform and align each other’s actions as Washington implements a world-class early learning system for all children from prenatal through third grade as envisioned in the *Washington Early Learning Plan*.
2. Develop a transition plan for implementing the new structure.

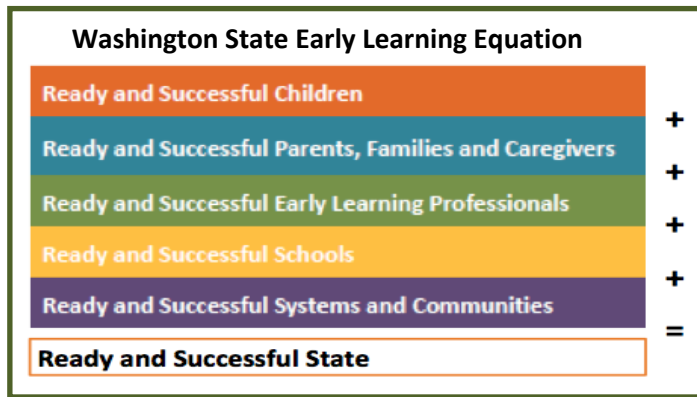
The project will employ processes similar to those used in development of the state’s *Early Learning Plan* and the *Draft Early Learning Guidelines*, with substantial exploration, transparent communication and opportunity for public input. .

The Early Learning Plan: Washington’s 10-Year Early Learning Roadmap

The goal of the *State and Local Coordination Project* purpose is to facilitate implementation of the *State Early Learning Plan* and advance the ELP vision that:

*In Washington, we work together so that all children start life with a solid foundation for success, 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 develop mentally and culturally appropriate**, our system partners with families to ensure that every child is healthy, capable and confident in school and in life.*

The ELP lays out a framework for a comprehensive system of care, education, programs and services for children and families. The *Plan*, and its 36 strategies, is organized according Washington’s *early learning equation*.



The *State and Local Coordination Project* will encompass the overarching early learning system described in the ELP, which include a number of independent systems that support the development and learning of children from prenatal to third grade.

These systems include:

- Prenatal care;
- Child care and preschool;
- Kindergarten through third grade;
- 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; and
- Professional development for early learning professionals.

Guiding Documents & Parameters for the State and Local Coordination Structure

1. **Washington State Early Learning Plan.** As noted above, the Early Learning Plan is the state's 10-year roadmap. The purpose of the coordination structure is to advance implementation of the Early Learning Plan. The Plan specifies:
 - The vision, goals, outcomes, systems and strategies that the coordination structure should encompass (see above); and that,
 - Early learning in Washington spans prenatal care through 3rd grade.

2. **Joint Resolution Partnership (JRP) Resolution.** The JRP resolution states the commitment of DEL, OSPI and Thrive to collaborate in building a strong, comprehensive early learning system for all children birth to age eight and to share responsibility and accountability for achieving this vision. The agencies have resolved to:
 - Honor the prior work and involvement of families and children and early learning partners including schools;
 - Work toward a common vision;
 - Develop an accountability framework with defined leadership roles; and to,
 - Work together to ensure advancement of a seamless, learner-focused, world-class early learning system in Washington State.

3. **Early Learning Advisory Council Role.** By statute (Senate Bill 5389), ELAC's role is "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. 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." ELAC membership and member terms are also specified.

4. **Federal State Advisory Council Grant.** This grant, which funds the SLC project, states that the SLC process will:
 - Engage existing planning groups and efforts, proposes provision of min-grants to local/regional groups to facilitate their engagement
 - Create/ utilize mechanisms to formally connect local and state governance for the purpose of coordinate services, assuring effective use of funds and providing infrastructure and coordination;
 - Create a state-level governance mechanism that will provide durable oversight of the early learning enterprise and take responsibility for planning, assessment, distribution of resources and agenda setting.
 - Establish a stable funding stream to support infrastructure for agenda setting; and,
 - Utilize NGA technical assistance (January 2010 grant. Still in effect?).

Interim Governance Roles Included in the SAC Grant that can Inform Decision Making-Roles

The grant includes an interim governance plan that utilizes the JRP Partnership Agreement to ensure that ELP strategies and priorities are advanced (p 34). The grant states that ELAC will serve as the "central mechanism at the state level for providing oversight and direction to the field regarding execution and progress of the plan."

5. **Head Start Act of 2007** –This federal Act requires governors to designate a council to serve as the state advisory council on early education and care for children from birth to school entry. ELAC serves as the Washington Council. Required council activities related to state and local coordination, which will

be incorporated into the (considered in?) development of the SLC structure, include:

- Conducting a periodic statewide needs assessments;
- Identifying opportunities and barriers to collaboration and coordination among federally and state funded early learning programs;
- Development of recommendations for increasing overall participation of children in existing early learning programs;
- Development of recommendations regarding establishment of a unified data collection system for public early learning programs;
- Development of recommendations regarding statewide professional development for early childhood educators;
- Assessing the capacity and effectiveness of 2- and 4-year public and private institutions of higher education in supporting development of early childhood educators; and
- Making recommendations for improvements in state early learning standards.

ⁱ K. Ponder (August 2011) Building Early Childhood Systems: The Collaborative Leadership and Accountability Model. BUILD