

CEELO YEAR ONE EVALUATION

Final Evaluation Report

Submitted by:

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Introduction

The Center for Enhancing Early Learning Outcomes (CEELO) was created to improve the states' knowledge about and use of early childhood comprehensive assessment systems; enhance the states' use of assessment data and other information to improve program quality; help states increase the knowledge and skills of the early learning workforce; strengthen the alignment of birth through 3rd grade educational policies and systems; and increase the coordination of resources and policies across statewide systems.

CEELO's ultimate goal is to increase the number of children from birth through third grade that are prepared to succeed in school.

This evaluation was designed to help assess the extent to which CEELO has achieved its objectives during its first year and to provide information to CEELO staff that will help shape the development of CEELO in year two.

To achieve this end, the evaluators helped to design and analyze the first annual survey of CEELO users; conducted semi-structured interviews with key clients in four states; and interviewed CEELO's leadership staff in these four states. Evaluators also held conference calls with CEELO leadership staff to discuss evaluation issues.

This report provides the results from these three formal evaluation activities and provides a discussion and conclusions. In the appendices, specific background data and responses to CEELO leadership questions is provided.

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Assessing CEELO's Impact

To achieve its goal CEELO provided a wide array of technical assistance products and services to its clients. The overall value and impact of CEELO's products and services was assessed through: a national survey of early educator state technical assistance providers, in-depth interviews with clients in state education agencies, and in-depth interviews with CEELO facilitators.

CEELO National Survey Results

To help assess the perceived quality and impact of CEELO's technical assistance activities a web-based survey was conducted in November 2013.

Population surveyed:

Of the 176 (84 percent) survey respondents who identified their role, 39 percent¹ indicated "Technical assistance provider," 35 percent said "State education agency staff," 20 percent indicated "Other," and 7 percent checked "Other state agency staff." One hundred and forty-eight (71 percent) of the respondents indicated that they had attended a "meeting, event, presentation, or webinar" in the preceding year.

Products and materials:

Ninety-three (49 percent) of the 192 people responding said they had "... received products and materials from CEELO in the past year." Ninety-nine (52 percent) indicated that they had not. Of those who indicated that they had received products and materials from CEELO, 91 cited specific examples: 80 percent used the website; 66 percent used products and briefs created by CEELO; and 53 percent used materials distributed in the NIEER newsletter. More than 90 percent of these

¹ Note: All percentages rounded to whole numbers, therefore, percentage totals may not add up to 100%.

respondents rated the quality of CEELO products and materials either “high” or “very high” for their quality, relevance, usefulness to policy, and usefulness to practice. Slightly more than two thirds indicated that CEELO products and materials had increased their knowledge and that they shared what they learned with colleagues. Almost a quarter of these respondents indicated that CEELO products and materials had “informed policies.”

Information and Technical Assistance:

Of the 210 survey respondents, 51 (26 percent) indicated that they had requested information and technical assistance from CEELO in the past year. Twenty-one (10 percent) indicated that they had made more than one technical assistance request during this time. Those who indicated that they had requested technical assistance rated the assistance they received highly. Ninety-two percent rated the quality and relevance of the technical assistance either “high” or “very high.” Eighty-seven percent of the respondents rated usefulness to policy of the technical assistance they had received as either “high” or “very high” and 85 % rated its usefulness to practice either “high” or “very high.”

Almost two thirds of the respondents said the services allowed them to either “provide authoritative support for information I may need to provide to others;” “increased my understanding of a topic I already knew something about;” “shared what I have learned from CEELO with colleagues;” and/or that “I have developed relationships that will be helpful to me in my work.”

These respondents also indicated that they had, among other things, used CEELO technical assistance as a basis for engaging in conversations with parents about early development, learning outcomes, and standards; helping prepare presentations; creating documents related to measures of classroom quality; to develop early learning standards; creating a state-wide plan for early learning; compiling resources to help develop a comprehensive definition of literacy; revising state early childhood indicators; consulting on an early learning initiative; implementing a newly approved state-funded prekindergarten initiative; and gathering information on teacher evaluation and teaching competencies related to serving diverse student populations.

Webinars:

During its first year CEELO offered a total of six webinars across the different areas:

- **Equitable Access to Quality Pre-K.** Twenty-seven percent of respondents reported taking part in this webinar.
- **Focus on Formative Assessment.** Twenty percent of respondents reported taking part in this webinar.
- **Understanding the Birth Through Third Grade Framework.** Twenty percent of respondents reported taking part in this webinar.
- **State Early Learning Standards: Lessons from Applying Implementation Research.** Five percent of respondents reported taking part in this webinar.
- **Making the Most of the NIEER State of Preschool Yearbook.** Four percent of respondents reported taking part in this webinar.
- **Child Care and Early Education Research Connections.** One percent of respondents reported taking part in this webinar.

Among those responding to the survey it appears that there is considerable interest in “Equitable Access to Quality Pre-K, Formative Assessment,” and “Understanding the Birth Through Third Grade Framework.” It is, however, impossible to know whether and to what degree webinar attendance rates may have been influenced by non-content-related issues such as scheduling. One respondent noted, for example, “Some of the great webinars were during RTT/ELC application and we were unable to participate....”

Reliably assessing the relative interest in topical offerings will require more data gathered over time. One respondent, when asked to make recommendations for CEELO’s future work, suggested that webinars be recorded for people who were unable to attend. Recording webinars may very well increase access to and thus the impact of CEELO’s webinars. Interviews with CEELO staff indicate that technical issues and lack of staff capacity meant that only audio recordings (without the accompanying PowerPoint slides) were available on the website. Staff training and allocating the resources necessary to allow CEELO to post both the audio and visual components of its webinars on its website is something CEELO’s leadership team should consider for year two.

Several webinars intentionally targeted a limited audience such as regional comprehensive centers which accounts for lower participation rates. Given the limited number of responses to the annual survey for any specific webinar, it is not possible to draw fine-grained conclusions about the perceived quality of webinar content from this survey. However, overall, the webinars were, without exception rated either “high” or “very high” on quality, relevance, usefulness to policy, and usefulness to practice by approximately 90 percent of all attending respondents. Many respondents also reported that the webinar(s) they attended “increased my understanding of a topic I already knew something about” and that they “shared what I learned from CEELO with colleagues,” and that the webinar(s) had “raised new questions for me that I had previously not considered.”

National RoundTable:

The CEELO National RoundTable on Early Education Assessment Challenges was attended by 21 percent of survey respondents. Over 90 percent of respondents who had attended the RoundTable indicated that the quality of the RoundTable was “good” or “very good.” Eighty-nine percent indicated that the RoundTable had “increased my understanding of a topic I already knew something about;” 70 percent indicated that they had “shared what I learned from CEELO with colleagues” and that “I have developed relationships that will be helpful in supporting me in my work.” Sixty-one percent indicated that the RoundTable had “raised new questions for me that I had not previously considered.” Thirty percent reported that “It increased my knowledge on a new topic” and “It has informed policies.” The remaining 16 percent indicated either “Don’t know if it had an impact” or “Other.”

Conference Presentations:

Twenty-two percent of survey respondents reported attending a presentation by CEELO at a conference. Eighty percent or more of these respondents rated the quality of the presentation(s) they attended as “high” or “very high.” More than three quarters reported that the presentation(s) had “increased my understanding of a topic I already knew something about.” Over 40 percent

reported that the presentation(s) had “raised new questions” and that they had shared what they learned with colleagues.

How Information Provided by CEELO was used:

Forty-four (21 percent) of survey respondents commented on how the information they received from CEELO informed their work. Most often, respondents indicated that they used CEELO materials to keep up to date, to share with colleagues and others, to improve their own knowledge, and as resources to use as needed. Some mentioned the CEELO website and webinars as particularly valuable resources. And a few indicated that CEELO had a broader impact on policy and practice: “CEELO’s work has informed and increased policy maker’s funding of Smart Beginnings programs statewide.” “A white paper on the nationally recognized measures of classroom quality was provided and informed our RFP process.” “The content of the materials informed our work on the implementation of the Early Learning Challenge grant.” “i (sic) have used the information in developing training materials around outcomes for preschool coordinators for EC conference.”

What CEELO Has Done Well:

Ninety-nine (47 percent) of the survey respondents commented on what CEELO was doing well. The comments indicated that CEELO has, over the course of the year, provided timely technical assistance, that was of high quality, and of use in both policy making and practice. CEELO was also seen as providing a valuable forum for considering Birth-3rd grade issues, being responsive to local needs, working in a collaborative manner, coordinating well with other TA centers and organizations, and as helping build SEA capacity. The CEELO website and webinars were given as examples of the quality of CEELO’s work.

One respondent summed it up this way: “ Convening leaders on key topics- building stronger infrastructure to support states on early learning (i.e. connecting better with Comprehensive Centers) – focus on outcomes – really needs to be a focus to keep the field’s attention on children and not so much on systems changes which can be hard to trace down to impacts on children – sharing information.” This response captures how broadly and effectively CEELO has been at meeting its first year objectives as well as pointing out the work ahead for year’s 2-5.

Recommendations for Future CEELO Work:

Sixty-one (29 percent) survey respondents provided recommendations for future CEELO work.

Future focus areas identified included teacher preparation requirements, teacher evaluation, aligning EE outcomes and professional development, serving English language learners, migrant children and children with exceptional needs, and examples of how strategic initiatives are being implemented.

The survey results suggest that CEELO has some work to do in developing its communications and outreach. Listed below are survey respondents’ comments related to communications/outreach:

- “I did not receive notices of the webinars – I might have participated or sent to my stakeholders and colleagues.”

- “Find ways to localize the findings of CEELO such that early childhood quality is defined in practice, programs, and quality...”
- “Regarding webinars – I guess I am not on the list serve to share that webinars are coming up. If I could be on the listing we would appreciate being invited. We would have attended the other sessions if given the notification.”
- “Respond when someone emails you a question.”
- “I would like to get more regular updates and to be included in national roundtables.”
- “What kind of outcomes are you helping states with, are you helping them with data systems to help get them there?”
- “I have not participated in the Webinars because I have not realized their significance. Also, I must not be monitoring my e-mails closely enough to realize they are being organized by CEELO and that I am the intended audience.”
- “...I don't recall seeing CEELO briefs and would like to know what you are writing and when the briefs can be expected so we can use them...”
- “I would love to learn more. Is there a newsletter I can participate in?”
- “If not already possible, provide links to areas of info so we can just link it to our websites for other (sic) to directly contact you. Parents do not want a lot of paper to take home anymore.”

Many respondents wanted CEELO to keep doing what it has done over the first year and build on that work. They called, for example, for more collaboration, more frequent face-to-face convenings, more dialogue, improvement in the way in which lessons learned from other states are solicited, more focus on practical solutions, more focus on what it will take for SEAs to “get ahead of the curve in EC work,” and more work with regional centers, as well as continued outreach and collaboration. Some respondents stated simply that CEELO's work was “good,” “great,” “excellent,” and much appreciated.

Implications of the Survey Data

The survey results clearly suggest that CEELO technical assistance is regarded as high quality, that CEELO staff members are seen as responsive, collaborative, and as sources of valuable support and capacity building.

CEELO appears to be off to a good start. However, the number of respondent comments suggesting that CEELO is not yet able to reach all of its intended audiences indicate that a priority during year two should be to review CEELO's communications and outreach strategies to identify practices that should be changed and to determine if additional strategies should be deployed.

The first year's survey results also provide guidance about how to modify the survey for year two. CEELO staff and the external evaluators should begin in January to review and discuss changes to the year one survey instrument.

CEELO Client Interviews

To gain a richer understanding of the impact of CEELO's work, one hour semi-structured telephone interviews were conducted with ten recipients (out a pool of 13 potential interviewees) of CEELO technical assistance in four states: Arkansas, Kansas, Mississippi, and New Hampshire. Interviews with CEELO clients were conducted November 21 – December 6, 2013.

Eleven (of the 13 person interview pool) responded to the survey. None of the survey respondents was individually identified. However, as a group, the responses of these 11 respondents were reviewed to assess whether their responses differed from the overall survey responses. No important differences in survey patterns were noted

The in-depth interviews provided a more nuanced perspective on CEELO's performance and effectiveness. The evaluators also interviewed the CEELO lead technical assistance providers associated with each of the four states. This two-part approach yielded a cross validation for both the CEELO staff interviews and SEA personnel interviews.

A set of common, structured questions were provided to our interviewer, Elaine Duggan, who conducted 4 individual interviews and 2 group interviews, interviewing a total of 10 CEELO clients in 4 states. The interviews were focused on state agency personnel whose organizational positions ranged from staff person to program director to associate state superintendent. The most common job title was "early education program director" or the equivalent. Their tenure in their position was generally short, as would be expected from a nascent program area. The respondents' early education expertise ranged from substantial to neophyte and their state agency experience and expertise was also variable.

Did CEELO do what you expected?

This first structured question was directly focused on the primary CEELO goal of providing the support the state said they needed. The interviewees were uniformly positive in their responses albeit the type and focus of the service provided varied greatly by state.

In Arkansas, the primary activity was to assist the SEA in evaluating, researching and recommending revisions to the 2003 kindergarten readiness indicators. SEA staff was unanimous in saying CEELO "provided everything Arkansas needed" both in personal contacts and in electronic formats.

Kansas was struggling with a new law requiring early education cursive writing standards. CEELO connected them with a neighboring state and arranged visitations. They also connected Kansas with national experts and developed a positive response to the tricky area of cursive writing by preschoolers by locating cursive writing within a broader context of skills developed over time.

Mississippi is implementing a new early education law. This is the first such law in the state. Consequently, they were faced with developing an entirely new infrastructure. CEELO met their

expectations by helping them develop a group of nationally prominent technical advisors, conducting research on valid and reliable program quality and child outcome assessment measures, assisting in developing a RFP for LEA applications, and helping them construct a scoring template for evaluating the proposals.

New Hampshire had three different early education directors in one year. As a result, the focus of technical assistance changed a lot during this time. The current director reports that CEELO “exceeded her expectations” and she found CEELO to be a very effective and valuable “thought partner.” One of the previous directors, now working in a different state agency, echoed the view of the current incumbent. She found CEELO to be a valuable resource for current knowledge in the field that helped sustain her energy and focus.

The interviewees in the four states all reported that CEELO met their expectations even though the range of support activities was quite diverse.

Did CEELO increase your capacity to ensure the provision of high quality early education?

In Arkansas, capacity building took the form of serving as consultants and advisors to the staff through expediting, focusing and validating their work. In particular, they were able to review and revise their kindergarten screening assessment into something more appropriate than a traditional test. CEELO brokered connections with other states that allowed them to see their problems “through different lens.”

The Kansas coordinator said her capacity as a program leader was enhanced. In particular, their *Leadership Academy* got underway, collegial connections in other states were formed, their assessment system began to take shape and the need for a professional development system emerged. The philosophical need for remembering the social and emotional elements of early education was re-affirmed and licensure standards for EE providers began to take shape.

Mississippi early educators also felt their capacity was increased. The topical webinars and networking were of the most value to them. Their expertise in assessment was also advanced.

New Hampshire profited by having expert speakers arranged and strategic planning support provided. Although not strictly a CEELO issue, the state coordinator felt far more coordination was needed for licensing and articulation across the human services and education sectors of state government (This state Constitutional separation of authority was viewed as problematic). Competency based report cards, program articulation for half-day programs, and a new website exemplified CEELO’s raising of their goals and aspirations, and of CEELO “producing enduring tools.”

The theme that comes through across the four case-study states is that of expanding horizons; the visibility of new ideas and colleagues, and a sense of empowerment of individuals to see and do things that had not previously conceptualized.

What was the impact of CEELO technical assistance on your state’s policy and its practices?

In this area, the interviewee responses were shorter but represented a more concrete set of accomplishments (as contrasted with the valuable process outcomes).

In Arkansas, the policy decisions and regulations had already been completed. The task was to implement the program that took the form of revising content to align with the common core state standards. The group also generated an “early learning framework” that is a key information tool for the public, parents and educators.

Kansas’ primary goal was to develop a set of handwriting standards for preschoolers that was appropriate in content and form. This goal was accomplished and it is scheduled for state board approval in December 2013. The pre-vote feedback has been positive. Another impact is that Kansas now has expertise to develop standards in other areas. They have developed a new level of autonomy.

Perhaps Mississippi’s greatest accomplishment is to have developed and implemented a small EE program where none existed before. Their task was to take a brand-new law and implement it. This meant assisting in developing a state capacity. CEELO became a key advisor in building an infrastructure.

New Hampshire does not separately fund pre-school although, as reported by SEA staff, the area is growing by “leaps and bounds.” The state receives many requests for technical assistance and a great deal of latent energy has been stored which will ultimately be released. Both respondents expressed the feeling that state support (and staff reductions) has had the effect of thwarting or erasing some of the positive energy in this area.

What do you need from CEELO in the future?

The resource materials and webinars provided by CEELO were viewed as valuable and interviewees thought they should be continued.

Now that Arkansas has completed their standards, all the materials, curriculum, brochures, lesson plans, etc. will have to be revised. The teachers, by and large, will need extensive professional development.

Kansas faces the same dilemma. The state staff is uncertain as to how to implement the standards without teachers “freaking-out” about cursive writing for pre-school students. These standards place a new emphasis on fine-motor and oral communications and will require statewide professional development.

While Mississippi did not explicitly state these as future needs; evaluating RFPs, making awards and implementing programs at the local level appear to be the next set of challenges.

New Hampshire held a “power summit” with CEELO and the regional center, and state leaders referenced the aim of a common plan but no specifics were provided.

The Comprehensive Centers

The relationships between centers, SEAs, and CEELO varied by location and the nature of the involvement also varied as a function of personal relationships, and the professional focus and expertise of the individuals involved. While the formal lines of communication appear to have some ambiguity, no respondent reported this as a problem.

In Arkansas, the center was viewed as a partner and a conduit for contacts and information. In Kansas, CEELO was seen as the EE knowledge provider while the center contributed in terms of literacy and operations. The operative word was, again, partner. Mississippi relied on the Florida Center for Reading Research and reported that both CEELO and the center attended meetings with the center in an administrative role. The theme of CEELO being the EE experts and the centers being the administrative arm was again repeated in New Hampshire.

Conclusions from the client interviews

The services and expertise provided by CEELO supported a remarkable range of early education and state operational activities. This required that the CEELO staff be flexible and nimble in developing activities and providing services that ranged across such diverse needs as identifying best practices, providing research evidence, program administration advice, and the like.

Several respondents noted the natural organizational tensions between a particular state's culture and that of an "outside" group of advisors. On one hand, CEELO upped the level of the states' game and their level of expectations for themselves. On the other, CEELO had to respect the culture of the state and the state agency. CEELO people are well aware of this dynamic and have wisely adopted a "wait until invited" approach rather than inviting themselves in.

A somewhat related issue is that some materials were seen to be generic while the climate of each state is unique. However, the respondents indicated that the services provided were appropriate and tailored to the unique needs of their individual state. The interview data suggest that CEELO staff have done a good job of adapting materials and tailoring services to meet the needs and interests of clients in different states.

Overall the respondents were effusive and used positive language when describing and rating CEELO and its staff. Common to all the states were the reports of positive collegiality. In addition to technical advice, it was clear that professional relationships were formed that sustained and supported state personnel as they ventured into new territory.

CEELO Staff Interviews

As has been noted, CEELO clients in the four case study states (Arkansas, Kansas, Mississippi, and New Hampshire) gave CEELO high marks for networking effectively, collaborating effectively, and for being flexible and responsive to local needs. Clients also found the substantive support (i.e. - research evidence, best practices information) provided by CEELO staff to be of high quality, to be well targeted on their needs, and to have been provided in a manner that made it practical to utilize.

The four state lead members of the CEELO staff were interviewed on December 9, 2013. These staff members were able to identify specific examples from their work that demonstrated the qualities noted in both the survey responses and the client interviews. The agreement across this three-way data collection indicates that client and staff perceptions of the nature and quality of the first-year work done by CEELO are highly congruent.

CEELO staff conveyed a picture of an EE technical assistance landscape in which the roles of the state, the regional centers and of CEELO are still evolving. Generally, CEELO's focus is more on content while that of the regional centers is more on organizational support and development. That said, all of the staff members indicated in one way or another that their roles required them to be careful listeners, to be willing to modify their initial thinking and approaches, and to use a gentle touch focused primarily on the pragmatic aspects of what was to be accomplished rather than on philosophical boundaries and points of conflict.

CEELO staff reported learning a great deal about state-specific issues and then using that knowledge to search out appropriate and effective connections to the research base as well as to practices in other states. They also provided psychological support and re-assurance to state staff members who were often new to their tasks, working with inadequate resources, and/or in departments with high rates of staff turnover. In New Hampshire, for example, the requested technical assistance shifted frequently as three different EE directors occupied the position over the course of the year. Another complicating factor is that in some states the responsibility for early education programs is divided among different state agencies adding an additional dimension to the networking and collaboration.

The CEELO website was not launched until March of this year. It may be expected to play a larger role in buttressing CEELO's intensive field based support. It will be important to identify how the site fits into the overall strategic thinking of CEELO and to establish benchmarks for client engagement with the website. Webinars are a potentially powerful technical assistance tool. However, as one staff member observed, webinars are "flooding the market." Within that context CEELO should have a clear plan for the coming year that details the overall number, content, schedule and audiences. It is also important that CEELO support staff manage the logistics of the webinars so that invitations and notices are sent and followed up on in a timely fashion.

CEELO does not have its own newsletter. However, it does reach a wide audience through its front-page placement in the NIEER newsletter. This seems like an effective use of CEELO's resources.

The survey data, client interview, and staff interview data are highly congruent. These data indicate that CEELO staff members have established solid working relationships with SEA staff and that CEELO staff members are focused on CEELO's goal of increasing state capacity. However, it was also clear that CEELO was, at times, providing technical assistance to state agencies whose personnel lacked the knowledge or the resources to accomplish the tasks which they had been charged to accomplish. Given that state resources are often insufficient, existing capacity is minimal, and administrative infrastructure is weak, it will be an ongoing challenge for CEELO to help create significant increases in state capacity. There is a danger that CEELO staff may, in effect, begin to function as SEA support staff, and that when CEELO technical assistance is no longer available, the SEA's will simply stop doing those things made possible by CEELO's support.

Discussion and Conclusions

Year One Evaluation –

The survey results and the four in-depth case studies indicate that CEELO has successfully achieved its primary goal of providing needed support and increasing the capacity of state education agencies. The services provided were well received by early educators and state directors.

CEELO assistance took the forms of providing effective networking, consultation on particular projects, collaboration, and the collection and dissemination of research knowledge. This has placed a premium on flexibility and responsiveness. The breadth of the topical areas has ranged across the spectrum of program development, professional development, assessment and management domains.

CEELO's impact in year one is evident in concrete contributions to outcomes such as new state standards, the development of readiness checklists, and the establishment of collaborative relationships among stakeholders.

Evaluation Issues for Year Two

For the coming year, CEELO will need to continue its activities in the four target states (and doubtlessly with other states) as the initiatives, described in earlier sections of this report, reach the next step in their development.

As relates to the role of the evaluators in year two, a number questions emerge. For example:

- Will the broad survey again be conducted? We recommend that it be updated as needed and re-administered.
- Will the same four focus states be followed? The obvious advantage is longitudinal information but new states and priorities may also emerge.
- Will the evaluation need to focus, in part, on the *Leadership Academy* program?
- Will monthly (or bimonthly) telephone calls with the evaluators be needed as part of the formative evaluation process and to ensure that the evaluation process and CEELO's strategic goals are closely linked?
- Will the evaluation frame used this year be continued or modified in some fashion?

It will be important for the external evaluators and the CEELO leadership team to establish the framework for the year-two evaluation early on. We recommend that the goal be to have the year-two evaluation framework established by the end of January 2014.

Emerging Policy and Focus Issues for Year Two

Broadly viewed, the information received in the course of this evaluation suggests certain policy issues will require attention from CEELO in the coming year(s). For example:

- The professional development capacity that SEAs are able to provide to LEAs will be key. The demand is increasing exponentially. Expect the call for content and qualitative criteria for PD to emerge.
- Closely related to PD is the licensing of providers. The definitions of essential knowledge, skills, proficiencies and assessments will likely emerge on the policy agenda.
- Program dissemination and the building of local organizational capacities, already underway, will demand attention in this rapidly expanding area.
- The proper role and use of assessment measures is an issue. There is a political push for high-stakes student and program evaluation. For example, formative screening may morph into sorting in some states. This will have to be approached, technically, ethically and philosophically.
- The relationship between private and public providers will continue to be an issue. What are the proper state monitoring, licensing, evaluation, and enforcement procedures? How are high quality programs, operational strength and fiscal integrity assured?

It will be important at the start of year two for CEELO staff to determine, clearly articulate and memorialize, and then focus on those policy issues staff members consider to be most salient. The process of doing this can be part of establishing the year-two evaluation framework.

Appendix A

State Informant Interview Notes

Core Questions

Created 11/17/13

- 1) **Did CEELO increase your capacity to ensure the provision of high-quality early education?** (follow-up question: Can you provide specific examples and explain how they illustrate your increased capacity? Before moving on ask what capacities the respondent would like to have CEELO focus on in the coming year(s))
- 2) **What was the impact of CEELO technical assistance on your state's policy and on its practices?** (follow-up questions involve asking for specific policies and practices to be detailed and ranked, e.g., "Which policy [or practice] did CEELO technical assistance have the greatest impact on?" Ideally, there would be a ranked list of a few policies and few practices at the end of the interview.)
- 3) **As you know the technical assistance you received was provided in partnership between CEELO and the XXX Regional Center. To what extent did their joint efforts add to the impact of all you have described in the previous questions?**

State-Specific Questions

Arkansas:

1. What specific aspects of the TA provided by CEELO has helped you advance your objectives or goals toward developing the school readiness definition and indicators?
2. Although your work in establishing the standards completes that effort, do you have ideas about what follow-up would help in the fidelity of their implementation throughout the state?

Kansas:

1. What specific aspects of the TA provided by CEELO has helped you advance your objectives or goals toward developing the Kansas Handwriting Standards?
2. Although your work in establishing the standards completes that effort, do you have ideas about what follow-up would help in the fidelity of their implementation throughout the state?
3. Are there any other comments you'd like to make as we examine the effectiveness of CEELO's engagement with you and your department? Or, are there any ways you would suggest that CEELO improve its technical assistance process or support?

Mississippi:

1. What specific aspect of the TA provided by CEELO has helped you advance your objectives or goals toward establishing a state-funded pre-K program?
2. Were the products and services determined to be of high relevance and usefulness to SEA staff?
3. Although your work in establishing and administering a state-funded pre-K will be a long-term effort, how would you describe the outcomes of the technical assistance provided thus far for you, your program, or SEA?

New Hampshire:

1. What specific aspect of the TA has helped you implement or conceptualize how to best meet your objectives or goals?
2. We understand CEELO developed a number of materials for you. In what ways did this information help you and the state implement the state's goals and objectives?

ARKANSAS

Interview Conducted by: Elaine Duggan	Time: noon-1:00pm
Date: 12/3/13	Time Zone: MST

Person Interviewed: Tracy Tucker	Title: Director of Curriculum and Instruction
Organization: Arkansas Department of Education	Phone No: 501-682-1991
Contact Info: Tracy.Tucker@Arkansas.gov	State: AR
Additional Info/Details:	

Person Interviewed: Tonya Williams	Title: Division Director, Division of Child Care and Early Childhood Education
Organization: Arkansas Department of Education	Phone No: 501-320-8954
Contact Info: Tonya.L.Williams@arkansas.gov	State: AR
Additional Info/Details:	

Person Interviewed: Jackie Dedman	Title: Director
Organization: Arkansas Head Start Collaboration Office	Phone No: 501-371-0740
Contact Info: jackied@arheadstart.org	State: AR
Additional Info/Details:	

Person Interviewed: Paige Cox	Title: Arkansas Better Chance/State Pre-K Director
Organization: DHS Division of Child Care and Early Childhood Education	Phone No: 501-320-8940
Contact Info: paige.cox@Arkansas.gov	State: AR
Additional Info/Details:	

1. Did CEELO do what you expected it to do?

Yes. The Arkansas group had originally contacted Sharon Brooks at the South Central Comprehensive Center, hoping to get them to facilitate the work of the committee to examine a kindergarten readiness checklist for the state. They wanted to keep it in line with research and trends in early childhood education. Through CEELO, they worked mainly with Lori, sometimes face to face, and sometimes electronically. Lori provided them research and information in an effort to keep them going down the revision road they were on. She kept them working through their issues and now they do have a revised list of kindergarten indicators that they've taken to their early childhood commission, and will be taking back in January for their approval.

CEELO was wonderful and they provided everything Arkansas needed, or steered them in the correct direction. In addition they validated any concerns that occurred within the committee.

2. Did CEELO increase your capacity to ensure the provision of high-quality early education?

One of the advantages in using CEELO's technical assistance is the ability to get best practices information quickly. Because everyone in the committee has a full-time job, compiling the kindergarten readiness checklist was essentially "extra work". Having that capacity, with resources like Lori and Sharon, expedited and validated their work and ensured that they were on the right track, and being steered in the right direction. Thus no time was wasted.

CEELO was very helpful at facilitating discussions and encouraging them to think outside the box, and providing insight into what others were doing as well.

In coming years, in working with CEELO, some things will hinge on the announcement about Race to the Top. Arkansas wrote a significant piece about their current kindergarten screening, and replaced it with something more appropriate. They would like to use CEELO as a resource, because CEELO has now already done the background piece with Arkansas.

An example of the continuing assistance so far: Lori recently sent information about what Missouri was doing, and how to help with programs on both the pre-K and Kindergarten-and-up sides in thinking about policy, professional development, and the connectors between these roles. They would like to see more of what should be going on in classrooms, what states across the country are doing, what both groups (pre-K and older) should understand. Arkansas wants to be able to look through different lenses, with CEELO's help, to work to bridge what is happening and what should be happening in bringing the two groups together.

3. What was the impact of CEELO technical assistance on your state's policy and on its practices?

The groundwork had already been laid in Arkansas, because there were policies and regulations already in place, but with CEELO they went back and revisited the policies to make them more in line with Common Core State Standards.

Another goal they had in mind was to develop a school that would be beneficial to educators as well as to the public, including parents and families, about what it really looks like and what it means to be ready for school. They wanted, and got, a major emphasis on the early learning framework.

4. As you know the technical assistance you received was provided in partnership between CEELO and the South Central Comprehensive Center. To what extent did their joint efforts add to the impact of all you have described in the previous questions?

That partnership was one of the best things – in the past in their state they've had a person who worked for the South Central Comprehensive Center (SCCC), but she had retired. Sharon Brooks worked with them from the SCCC – she may have missed one meeting but in all the others, she helped facilitate the communication between Arkansas and what they needed, wanted and expected from Lori. So Sharon helped bridge the communication between CEELO and the state, and kept them up to date on the work each was doing.

(State-Specific)

1. What specific aspects of the TA provided by CEELO has helped you advance your objectives or goals toward developing the school readiness definition and indicators?

They were “absolutely impressed” with Lori’s knowledge of the state itself and their research around appropriate targets for their children. Not only did she provide research, “she just knew off the top of her head”, could cite things from her knowledge base, and it was very evident that she had real expertise on the subject.

Lori also knew quite a lot about what other states were doing, which was helpful.

2. Although your work in establishing the standards completes that effort, do you have ideas about what follow-up would help in the fidelity of their implementation throughout the state?

After their work is approved, Arkansas is going to have to revise all their materials such as their brochure, the calendar, etc. Their work will need to be embedded into all their materials and their professional development in the most appropriate way, as an outside resource to help guide their work.

In the K-12 world, they must get their early childhood teachers, kindergarten specifically, to have an understanding of what their readiness is. The teachers “don’t have a clue” now as to readiness. Now that they will have kindergarten and pre-K at the table, they want to keep going with their readiness work to give them as thorough an understanding as possible.

(State-Specific)

3. Are there any other comments you'd like to make as we examine the effectiveness of CEELO's engagement with you and your department? Or, are there any ways you would suggest that CEELO improve its technical assistance process or support?

In addition to the work that was done with their team, the resources CEELO provides on a daily, weekly, and monthly basis on the latest work around the country is outstanding. "Hats off" for their continued efforts to keep them abreast of the most recent evidence base and research base. They had no suggestions for improvement/support.

. KANSAS

Interview Conducted by: Elaine Duggan	Time: 10:00am-11:00am
Date: 12/3/13	Time Zone: MST

Person Interviewed: Gayle Stuber	Title: Early Childhood Coordinator
Organization: Kansas State Dept. of Education	Phone No: 785-296-5352
Contact Info: gstuber@ksde.org	State: KS
Additional Info/Details:	

1. Did CEELO do what you expected it to do?

They did. The situation was brand new for the Kansas folks, and it was the first time they used CEELO, so she didn't know what to expect. Gayle has known Jana and Lori for a long time, but had no expectations about what CEELO would do – and they did “great”.

In creating the handwriting standards, they were struggling with what they wanted from CEELO, but it turned out better than they expected. CEELO connected them with national sources, helped them talk through some issues, worked across the board with the handwriting folks, and were always willing to do whatever they wanted or needed.

They also worked with the technical people in Oklahoma, and everyone was willing to come meet face to face.

As Gayle and her colleagues learned more about what the state board wanted, their committee (consisting of in-state standards people) was able to brainstorm with CEELO's guidance and support about what they needed. Gayle started to say they “muddled through”, but stopped herself and realized they did much better than just muddling through.

Time-wise, it all worked out very well – CEELO was never late with any task. The best thing they did was to tease out what resources Kansas might need from other states, and act on that. CEELO helped them figure out what the next steps should be. Gayle and Jana have worked together a long time with early childhood specialists, and she knew Jana could say which things they must bring to the forefront within the early childhood realm. Gayle trusted their knowledge and judgment.

2. Did CEELO increase your capacity to ensure the provision of high-quality early education?

CEELO helped to build her capacity as early childhood coordinator - what the concerns are, what directions are best for the kids, what fits into the continuum of birth-Grade 8. CEELO stayed within its boundaries of early childhood to make sure she had what she needed. They helped her to see things that were useful.

Though Gayle was stuck at the airport and missed the annual meeting of early childhood specialists, she knows that one of the things CEELO does is support that particular group, working with specialists around the Leadership Academy. They are knowledgeable in working across states regarding early childhood. Jim Squires and Meghan (she couldn't remember last name) were part of the great staff. As a specialist in the State Dept. of Education, which can sometimes be limited, Gayle found it nice to be connected with others – CEELO is good at that, keeping them up to date on legislative activity, concerns, potential for future direction and how it might impact their work. So they helped not only with handwriting, but much more.

In the coming years, as Gayle is co-chair of the policy committee, she will work a lot with Jana and Lori – they've talked about the importance of an assessment system done appropriately and correctly, and how that fits in with the national scheme of things. She is hopeful that the Leadership Academy will be good. There is a lot going on, and they need to be in control of their own fate. CEELO will be quite well positioned because they have connections in many states as well as on a national level, so their leadership will be helpful.

In the future, Gayle would like some supports around creating and sustaining a professional development system in early childhood. The other piece of early childhood, K-Grade 3, gets lost a lot. In State Departments of Education, they should be able to do well and set a standard. Maintaining the continuum needs to be done in a coordinated, collaborative manner. Nationally defined "early childhood" is prenatal thru grade 3. Pre-K is "bad enough" but still has a foot in early childhood world. There must be a continuum of birth through Grade 3.

Gayle believes that we can't lose the social, emotional part of childhood as well – what's so great about CEELO is that they can hopefully maintain that integrity.

3. What was the impact of CEELO technical assistance on your state's policy and on its practices?

They now have handwriting standards that went to the state board – the vote is soon on that, this week or next. There is a big national discussion on if kids need to know how to write or just text. CEELO helped them look at the research around the importance of actual writing as it connects to literacy in learning. We can't overlook kinesthetic movement.

4. As you know the technical assistance you received was provided in partnership between CEELO and the Central Comprehensive Center. To what extent did their joint efforts add to the impact of all you have described in the previous questions?

CEELO provided a lot of the technical literacy, such as webinars, etc., so they could all see the same thing and talk to one another. The Central Comprehensive Center (C3) folks such as Lucy Trautman brought some of their knowledge around literacy. They were able to form partnerships with content work because all the groups had the necessary knowledge base.

(State-Specific)

1. What specific aspects of the TA provided by CEELO has helped you advance your objectives or goals toward developing the Kansas Handwriting Standards?

CEELO gave them specific information related to early childhood standards they were working on – they were great at saying what’s out there now. So Gayle and the committee were able to use what they specifically have in Kansas, then add the national supports and information.

CEELO helped them with bullet pointing and organizing what they wanted to present. Presenting to the board can be a little “nerve wracking”, so CEELO worked with them regarding what to say and how to say it. They worked together to provide the continuum.

2. Although your work in establishing the standards completes that effort, do you have ideas about what follow-up would help in the fidelity of their implementation throughout the state?

Gayle doesn’t actually know how they’ll implement the standards. It might depend on what the board says they’ll have to do with them.

Fine motor and oral communication (written language) are what Gayle’s committee put into the standards. CEELO was helpful in managing how that might look. She is not sure what they’ll need them for other than the standards. But they can probably help her “not to freak out” in saying the word “handwriting” to teachers of 3-year-olds. They are an excellent source for her now.

(State-Specific)

3. Are there any other comments you'd like to make as we examine the effectiveness of CEELO's engagement with you and your department? Or, are there any ways you would suggest that CEELO improve its technical assistance process or support?

She can't think of any improvements – they are so open saying “what can we do to help you, what do you need”, and are very responsive. All of that is in place already.

Gayle believes that CEELO has done a “fabulous job”. Because their staff comes from all walks of early childhood life and the world of education, it was nice to have it all wrapped up in one package.

Interview Conducted by: Elaine Duggan	Time: 10:00am-11:00am
Date: 11/21/13	Time Zone: MST

Person Interviewed: Kris Shaw	Title: Language Arts and Literacy Consultant
Organization: Kansas State Dept. of Education	Phone No: 785-296-4926
Contact Info: kshaw@ksde.org	State: KS
Additional Info/Details:	

2. Did CEELO increase your capacity to ensure the provision of high-quality early education?

Yes it did - Kansas now has a document for handwriting standards. Before their work with CEELO, they didn't know how the prerequisite skills for handwriting (e.g., holding a spoon, manipulating a pencil) were so important to cognitive development, and that that would play into what happened with handwriting in kindergarten through 3rd grade. CEELO helped them to understand that. The standards are up for adoption by the state in December.

Kris and the standards-writing committee wanted to show how those early childhood events happened, to make an alignment with Kansas Early Learning Standards and the new handwriting standards document they were composing. CEELO went through their original document and pulled things to demonstrate how to stair-step, with one event leading to the next in development.

In the coming years, Kansas will be able to use that bridge, from birth to when children start school, to explain why children should be doing these things at an early age. They will be able to show how giving children a pair of scissors and helping them practice, showing them how to use clay, etc. will help to build a foundation for skills and knowledge that they'll need, particularly in language and vocabulary.

CEELO taught them that things one wouldn't think would be tied to handwriting, such as communication, were in fact critical. CEELO showed Kris and committee the research that proves that handwriting helps with cognitive development and reading skills, and that fine motor skills like connecting shapes helps later when students put pen to paper.

Now in Kansas they're working more on that bridge, with their licensure standards for birth-kindergarten, early unified (preschool teachers), kindergarten teachers, reading specialists, and early education teachers. Through their Striving Readers grant, they're writing the Kansas Guide to Learning Literacy that includes the timeline from birth to 12th grade. They hadn't previously worked under the theory that many prerequisites need to be taught before school even began. There are other things they are working on now, all under the College- and Career-Ready standards, so their end goal of 12th grade children being self-sufficient can be reached. CEELO was helpful in setting them on this path.

3. What was the impact of CEELO technical assistance on your state's policy and on its practices?

CEELO had the greatest impact on Kansas developing the standards – if the standards are adopted in December, they will have a new set of handwriting standards for the state, which incorporates the framework of handwriting as a communication tool. (The board did ask them to produce this document, and their comments were very positive so far, so she thinks they will be adopted.)

Kansas will also have more support and direction for their state districts, and what needs to happen with handwriting as a communication tool for students. Thus they are providing a clearer message for their districts such that everyone will be on the same page.

CEELO also looked at the standards process itself – they helped with instructing the committee how to write a set of standards.

On the Kansas Dept. of Education website, the standards just say what will happen by a certain time but they don't recommend a specific curriculum. CEELO will have on their site some kind of vetting process so they can recommend different programs/materials. This will be useful as a resource for Kansas.

(Kansas is called a local control state – they provide the standards [e.g., by second grade, student must have legible handwriting] – but they don't say "here's the program you have to use".)

4. As you know the technical assistance you received was provided in partnership between CEELO and the Central Comprehensive Center. To what extent did their joint efforts add to the impact of all you have described in the previous questions?

The Central Comprehensive Center (C3) helped with all the technical aspects, like the webinar. They also assisted with suggestions on management (such as the recommendation to have two meetings instead of just one, etc.). They also had literacy experts that would contribute to the group's knowledge.

CEELO was all about research, finding resources for them, and helping them dig into the content of what the standards should say. Whenever the committee had problems with how to word things or how to go about putting the actual guidance in the document, CEELO would come in and help them figure out how best to express what they wanted to write.

For example, the word "automaticity" replaced a word (Kris couldn't recall what word, but she recalled that it sounded like they wanted the kids to write very quickly without comprehension). CEELO gave them the language needed to explain what they really meant.

The CEELO people were somewhat removed from the day-to-day involvement and details within the committee, so that they were able to step back and look at the issues more objectively, and could provide more of a rounded, all-encompassing overview in helping them write the standards.

(State-Specific)

1. What specific aspects of the TA provided by CEELO has helped you advance your objectives or goals toward developing the Kansas Handwriting Standards?

When CEELO first started with the Kansas team, they thought the Kansas people could make recommendations about a different curriculum. However, Kris told them that they could provide standards but couldn't say anything about curriculum. CEELO was able to provide curriculum information on their own website, where it would be "removed" from the state, but available to them. Kansas can now link to CEELO's website for resources regarding places that are vetting curriculum even though Kansas can't do that. Jana didn't have that in mind at start, but seeing a need for it, CEELO created it.

2. Although your work in establishing the standards completes that effort, do you have ideas about what follow-up would help in the fidelity of their implementation throughout the state?

One of the "hot topics" in coming out with this set of mandated standards is that kids have to learn cursive. People thought that it would take up a lot of time, but it's already taking place in the schools. It would be helpful if there was an explanation provided somewhere so that people could understand the issue without a knee-jerk reaction to it.

(State-Specific)

3. Are there any other comments you'd like to make as we examine the effectiveness of CEELO's engagement with you and your department? Or, are there any ways you would suggest that CEELO improve its technical assistance process or support?

CEELO had never helped with writing a set of standards before, and so were learning the process along with them. Kris believes that they came in thinking Kansas had a very structured process, but it wasn't it as structured as CEELO wanted it to be. She felt it was difficult to get that idea across to them, that there are steps they're going through with the whole process of writing the standards (which happens only every seven years), opening them up to public comment, sending them to the board, working on revisions – CEELO wanted a set date that it would be done but that was difficult to provide.

Kris felt that CEELO wanted Kansas to give them a packaged, set way that they write standards, despite the fluid process involved in the writing, dependent on when committees can meet, how much knowledge they have, etc. Many people who work on standards writing are friends, so one has to allow for chit-chat, etc. Kris felt that CEELO people were a bit impatient and formal at first; she thinks they need to realize that they're coming into an established group with its own dynamics. There was a feeling that CEELO people were a bit frustrated with Kansas because they were so casual. She felt an "I'm from Washington DC" vibe while she and her group were "merely from small-town Kansas".

That said, however, the committee was "whipped into shape", and needed to know that they were working with professionals, which was CEELO's role, and it was an effective one. They were able to get on the same page quickly, since CEELO set the framework and tone at the very beginning. They gave Kansas the focus that they're writing a set of standards to help with communication, not just forming perfect letters, but more about how to get children to communicate through handwriting. That was their job, and it was done well right from the start.

MISSISSIPPI

Interview Conducted by: Elaine Duggan	Time: 10:30am-11:30am
Date: 11/26/13	Time Zone: MST

Person Interviewed: Robin Lemonis	Title: Office Director for Dyslexia, Literacy, and Early Childhood
Organization: Mississippi Department of Education (Early Education Division)	Phone No: 601-359-2586
Contact Info: rlemonis@mde.k12.ms.us	State: MS
Additional Info/Details:	

Person Interviewed: Trecina Green	Title: Associate Superintendent
Organization: Mississippi Department of Education (Early Education Division)	Phone No: 601-359-2869
Contact Info: tgreen@mde.k12.ms.us	State: MS
Additional Info/Details:	

1. Did CEELO do what you expected it to do?

Yes, Robin and Trecina requested that CEELO help them come up with a list of nationally recognized measures of classroom quality. Jim Squires worked with them to provide a very thorough review, giving them detailed descriptions of those assessments.

They also asked CEELO to provide input for a Request For Proposal (RFP) draft for an early learning collaboratives council grant. Jim reviewed that for them and gave them meaningful feedback.

In collaboration with a few other groups, the Alliance for Early Success and the CEELO Southeast Comprehensive Center, Jim helped them to identify early childhood education experts across the nation to serve on a Technical Advisory Committee (TAC). He was helpful in the recommendation of experts in the field that they could invite to serve on the TAC.

2. Did CEELO increase your capacity to ensure the provision of high-quality early education?

Yes.

One aspect of the support that was especially helpful was the webinars from other states, which talked about their RFPs. Robin and Trecina could get ideas from a particular state, so that helped with building their own state's capacity.

Regarding the coming years, the fact that CEELO did connect them with other state contacts, along with their previously implemented early childhood grant-type efforts, will serve as a useful resource. Jim Squires gave examples of Requests For Proposal that had been developed in other states, so/ that they could use them guides for their own writing both presently and down the road.

In the future, they do want some assistance with their implementation efforts, working to grant awards to their first round of collaborative councils, and there is a list of things they will ask CEELO to help them with as far as monitoring the implementation. Once collaboratives are in place, it will help them as they're making decisions for studying cut* scores for kindergarten readiness.

Mississippi will require some guidance as they are putting together monitoring and evaluation tools for their process.

*A cut score is a standard setting used to determine how many items or components a student would have to get correct to be considered advanced, proficient, and so on, to indicate a minimum rate of readiness for kindergarten.

3. What was the impact of CEELO technical assistance on your state's policy and on its practices?

Robin and Trecina pointed back to their answer for Question 1, indicating that their state's policy is driving everything that they have talked about. In other words, CEELO's technical assistance has aided in compiling a list of nationally recognized measures of classroom quality, providing input for writing RFPs, and putting together a Technical Advisory Committee.

They noted that the legislative bill CEELO has helped with is senate bill 2395.

4. As you know the technical assistance you received was provided in partnership between CEELO and the Southeast Comprehensive Center. To what extent did their joint efforts add to the impact of all you have described in the previous questions?

The Southeast Comprehensive Center (SECC) and the Florida Center for Reading Research were the groups they worked with – when Mississippi drafted the early learning standards for programs serving three- and four-year-old children, the groups reviewed their draft standards, proofed them, and asked clarifying questions in order to make suggestions for improvement.

The groups have also have reviewed and suggested teaching strategies to be drafted based on those early learning standards.

When meetings were conducted with the Technical Advisory Committee, both CEELO and the SECC had reps at that meeting. Jim helped conduct the meetings, and the Center took notes and wrote minutes, so that any information that they needed was captured during the meeting day.

(State-Specific)

1. What specific aspect of the TA provided by CEELO has helped you advance your objectives or goals toward establishing a state-funded pre-K program?

CEELO helped by providing state implementation guides for Mississippi to follow. As they reviewed those guides, CEELO would find other states that had followed the same format, and had already determined what parts would be beneficial for them. It made their writing the proposal much easier.

CEELO also weighed in on Mississippi's scoring rubric, their points, and what areas they needed to be evaluating.

2. Were the products and services determined to be of high relevance and usefulness to SEA staff?

Yes. CEELO provided quite useful products, such as nationally recognized measures of classroom quality, which were very relevant. They needed these before sending out their Request for Proposal.

The resources from other states were helpful as well, in showing them what was effective and what wasn't in an RFP.

CEELO was also a great sounding board – if a question came up and they needed on-demand technical assistance, they could write a quick email or make a phone call. CEELO was very responsive to these requests.

CEELO also provided the research Robin and Trecina needed to support several of their decisions.

(State-Specific)

3. Although your work in establishing and administering a state-funded pre-K will be a long-term effort, how would you describe the outcomes of the technical assistance provided thus far for you, your program, or SEA?

Again, CEELO exceeded their expectations (this phrase was repeated several times throughout the interview). Their work with CEELO has allowed them to attain some sustainability, to make connections with other states and be aware of what others have done wrong so they won't make same mistakes. CEELO's timeliness in response to their needs was over and above what they were hoping to achieve.

NEW HAMPSHIRE

Interview Conducted by: Elaine Duggan	Time: 9:00am-10:00am
Date: 11/26/13	Time Zone: MST

Person Interviewed: Mary Earick	Title: Early Childhood Specialist, Director of Title I
Organization: New Hampshire Dept. of Education	Phone No: 603-786-7493
Contact Info: Mary.Earick@doe.nh.gov	State: NH
Additional Info/Details: Mary has been in her position for about 2 months. Her answers will reflect only recent involvement with CEELO in her current position.	

1. Did CEELO do what you expected it to do?

CEELO exceeded Mary's expectations – typically if you go to an event, the follow-up can take many months. CEELO was immediately responsive to her needs; they assisted in clarifying her purpose and goals, and were wonderful at guiding her and helping her understand how to best serve the goals of the state.

Mary has been in her Director of Title I position for only eight weeks. She attended meetings as a consultant over the summer, and when she came into the new position and made initial contact, CEELO provided amazing support for a summit they initiated. They are a thought partner at the moment and will help her with plans for the next 12 months.

Technical assistance comes in two ways. Some groups she has worked with have a goal to offer assistance, but don't always have the capacity to follow up on that, or don't realize the human capital necessary to meet those needs. From her perspective, CEELO understood not only what her needs were, but were ready to actually help her to implement her plan.

2. Did CEELO increase your capacity to ensure the provision of high-quality early education?

There were people at different phases of changes going on in New Hampshire (Patty Ewan has since left). Mary's piece: they participated in an early childhood summit on November 18th that brought together the 1st-3rd grade communities. CEELO worked with her to think through the bridging of these communities. Shannon Ayers provided speaker support and was "so thoughtful at what she does". It was an event that will define the next three years, so it was critical to have something very meaningful to work with.

Mary felt like she did this with the "birth-age 5" community to organize an amazing event in New Hampshire, to ensure that representative groups in each region for the summit were brought together. These proceedings will initially inform a spring event, and long-term, an annual event.

At the debriefing next week, they will make collaborative decisions in how their resources will complete their long-term plan. With their strategic planning, CEELO has provided additional support prior to this (Patty would be able to give concrete examples).

The focus in coming years: structural change will only occur when the birth-Grade 3 (age 8) community will identify as one group, with one mission. Mary would like CEELO to listen to her on this point. Strategies around curriculum and assessment need to be applied from birth to Grade 3. Pre-K or K-Grade 3 is part of the present elementary system. Because of certification, early childhood prep is hugely different from K-8. Early childhood prep was Grades 1 through 3. A kindergarten teacher would have trouble with kids who have issues from having never seen a letter, versus those who read at 3rd grade level.

As an experienced teacher, Mary could lay that onto every content area. For creating a large group like K-8, National Board Certification is the way to go. However, K-8 certification is so broad that it doesn't provide the necessary steps. For birth-age 5 a teacher doesn't need any certification, so as a socioeconomic issue, one will go into birth-age 5 because they can't afford a degree or certification. Though highly qualified, this teacher will "butt heads" because in public school, birth-3 has not come together with K-8. Mary believes it is very nuanced but feels that the two groups (birth-3 and K-8) are ready to come together as one. Nationally she would like to (or would like CEELO to) provide a certification to reflect the qualifications necessary to raise children.

It is critical, she believes, that everyone be on the same page.

3. What was the impact of CEELO technical assistance on your state's policy and on its practices?

The summit has not directly impacted policy. In New Hampshire, preschool is not funded. That said, what they do is offer enough technical assistance that preschool is growing at an unbelievable rate. The state won't say public education is pre-K thru high school because policy at government level is not affected, but belief systems across state are changing in that governor supports the summit. She is now doing a survey (as part of her 12-month plan) as to how many preschools are in the state and how many kindergartens are now full-day. CEELO won't be directly involved, but they'll be able to publish it – she wants to speak to them about that – they only publish state-funded presentations, but should diversify to state-funded vs. private as a subcategory.

This hasn't happened yet, but she sees it happening. Mary doesn't see the present legislation doing it, but feels they are laying the groundwork now such that the next legislation will see it their way.

4. As you know the technical assistance you received was provided in partnership between CEELO and the Northeast Comprehensive Center. To what extent did their joint efforts add to the impact of all you have described in the previous questions?

They just had a “power summit” – Diane from CEELO and Andrea Thompson and Holly Cavender-Wood from the Northeast Comprehensive Center to discuss the plan for early learning.

Andrea let Holly and the CEELO representative Diane know, so they’re not duplicating effort regarding the larger plan which will come up right before the summit. Holly came as a process observer to the summit. They are creating one work plan that NECC helped put together, so CEELO will have that to best support early learning.

Mary just finished writing her Race to the Top grant as a consultant; CEELO did a “phenomenal job” on providing a nice technical document on the research over the summer.

(State-Specific)

1. What specific aspect of the TA has helped you implement or conceptualize how to best meet your objectives or goals?

Because she's new, they've assisted her in understanding how to grade technical assistance services (also in conjunction with NECC). She could probably say more to this question in a few months.

2. We understand CEELO developed a number of materials for you. In what ways did this information help you and the state implement the state's goals and objectives?

Where Mary came in was work with Race to the Top; CEELO helped created several of the documents that Patty can talk about.

3. Are there any ways you would suggest that CEELO improve the products and materials to be more relevant or useful to you?

No, they were very responsive, and have been so with other ideas that have come up. Their materials were quite useful.

Interview Conducted by: Elaine Duggan	Time: 10:30-11:30am
Date: 12/6/13	Time Zone: MST

Person Interviewed: Patty Ewan	Title: Early Childhood Specialist
Organization: New Hampshire Dept. of Education	Phone No: (410) 767-4441
Contact Info: pewen@msde.state.md.us	State: NH
Additional Info/Details: Patty left her position in the NH Department of Education and is currently in the Early Learning Branch, Division of Early Childhood Development at the Maryland State Department of Education.	

1. Did CEELO do what you expected it to do?

Yes. She found CEELO to be useful, timely, professional, articulate and prepared. She enjoyed working with Diane and Jim so much, and the two people from NECC (Elizabeth and Holly). A big part of that was, because she was working on her own, just to be able to dialogue back and forth in the manner they did was very helpful.

Jim and Diane were very candid about funding, legislative support, constructional shifts, and understanding the Common Core, with regard to other states. Patty could get their feedback on where other struggles were taking place in the nation and they worked collaboratively to come up with many different things. She was on her own in NH, but she was doing okay. Working with a national technical assistance team engaged in the national conversation and able to sustain her energy was wonderful.

Patty felt that there were no other pathway or avenues to build that capacity, so through CEELO's resources and technical knowledge, thus providing her a richer pool of experience, she was able to make efficient decisions to keep her work going forward. Her position was a full-time one, and there is no full-time early childhood person any more. Their timing was wonderful, and in that dialogue, they motivated her reflective practice, which was huge due to their input. They had the perspective of the nation, as well as the region, with regard to knowledge and experience in education.

2. Did CEELO increase your capacity to ensure the provision of high-quality early education?

Patty's role in NH was decentralized decision making. Because of that, it was hard for her to answer this question from an evidence-based objective position, because she can't give examples of the evidence at the student and classroom level, or the program level, or with regard to direct training with teachers and supervisors.

But yes, CEELO drove the Office of Early Childhood (her) to construct and leave things in place that were timeless, including competency report cards for primary grades, a cross-walk guide for half-day education (65% of their programs are half-day). They also completely reconstructed their website (giving a prioritized mission of education). CEELO's work raised their thought process and produced enduring tools.

As for coming years, she found this hard to answer as well. The only thing she could think of is that she gave them a copy of the matrix she made, and believes they should focus on that matrix. That will "unlock so much instruction". She is soon moving to a job at the Dept. of Defense and plans on taking the matrix worldwide. There are a lot of solutions in there that would be time well spent, in her opinion.

3. What was the impact of CEELO technical assistance on your state's policy and on its practices?

None, unfortunately. The example for that is the fact that as a State Dept. of Education, NH went from a full-time early childhood education position (hers) to a part-time one. Patty found this discouraging. There are some things happening in which they say they're going forward, but none of those things have actually moved forward. Patty's group didn't really talk about policy-level things, but more program-level issues.

4. As you know the technical assistance you received was provided in partnership between CEELO and the Northeast Comprehensive Center. To what extent did their joint efforts add to the impact of all you have described in the previous questions?

The Northeast Comprehensive Center (NECC) provided meeting space, and technical assistance for phone meetings. Holly (Cavender-Wood) took care of meeting mechanics. They did a lot of that kind of work. The guts of the research and national perspective came from CEELO. They were heavily involved in the level of theory and practice. The NECC did some literature searches, and during the meetings they were active dialogue participants, which was helpful. But Patty found she had a much stronger representation of knowledge from CEELO.

One of the issues Patty had with the NECC was in the fact that they wanted to drive issues regarding early intervention and Birth-3 that were outside New Hampshire's purview in the Dept. of Education. Preschool special education, for example, is under Health and Human Services. They wanted to get into workforce practices and alignment, which wasn't part of the Dept. of Education. Education and the workforce and charts of licensure being done by Health and Human Services in collaboration with early childhood – that's a different state agency, and Patty wanted to stay within her own department.

This was difficult for Patty because she felt she spent a lot of time saying "no" to Holly and Elizabeth and that they don't do that – they "thought SHE didn't get it but THEY were the ones who didn't get it".

Patty thinks it was a combination of "experience and jealousy". Elizabeth was more reserved, coming from California, so she didn't "get" New England – but she was ready to learn. Holly had just come off an experience where she had done this with another state and it had gone very well. She felt successful and wanted to replicate that experience.

Patty respects that and understands, though it was frustrating at the time. The NECC eventually settled into meeting mechanics and keeping track of it all; that seemed to be a good role, but they "wouldn't be comfortable any more".

When asked if she felt CEELO had a firm grasp of the NH committee's role (as opposed to what she felt about the NECC), Patty answered that she felt CEELO "understood totally".

(State-Specific)

1. What specific aspect of the TA has helped you implement or conceptualize how to best meet your objectives or goals?

The Common Core State Standards were written for full-day K-12. NH state law was requiring districts to offer half-day kindergarten (this happened in 2010, the same year Common Core was adopted in NH). 65% of NH kindergarteners were half-day. They needed to know what the expectations were when teachers only taught for 2 hours and 15 minutes a day. So half-day pacing guide was created, to fit a full day's standard into half that time. They took some of the main documents – literacy plan, standards for school approval, etc., and revised them.

Also, Diane did the cross-walk to the Common Core. There were gaps in the beginning, but it “really was just this incredible intellectual exercise”. Are they the right gaps – do they address the things that have to be done, how does it build competency – these questions led to Patty’s matrix that she finds so valuable.

She cites this as “probably the best example” of CEELO’s help – for her it opened up so many thought levels of this whole modern innovative evolution of education.

2. We understand CEELO developed a number of materials for you. In what ways did this information help you and the state implement the state’s goals and objectives?

Though they only worked together for less than a year, she feels that she got much assistance, and has provided the answer to this question in her previous answers.

3. Are there any ways you would suggest that CEELO improve the products and materials to be more relevant or useful to you?

She thinks that, in general, tech centers have become very formulaic. She would like to see CEELO individualize to their personality and skills.

Patty describes a typical scenario with a webinar – “you get on a webinar; everyone thanks everyone for their valuable time and how wonderful they all are. Presenter 1 goes a mile a minute because she’s feeling pressure to do all this content, Presenter 2 throws it down, Presenter 3 brings it all together, then they have a vote – at what point in this process did you start cleaning out your inbox?”

She thinks it would be nice to have 45 minutes in which you really “drill down” into a topic. They’re all becoming “bleached out” – how about doing something that’s really about decentralized local decision states, for top-down states, for states that have the responsibilities moving health and human services and education into one unit. She believes that webinars have to follow this rigid format – she feels like it’s at the point where they’ve been at this a few years, their crosswalk guide is posted on their site and it’s wonderful, but how often do people really go to their site and read a 20-page white paper?

She wants CEELO to define themselves by its people’s expertise and their excellence (which they have a ton of). She just wishes there wasn’t a standard template for every seminar – “go in, sit down, watch video, it’s boring!”

All that said, however, she emphasized that when she needs help, CEELO is consistently her first choice, If they have whatever she’s looking for, she knows it will be quality material, and “that’s what counts.”

APPENDIX B

Staff Comments on 1-15-14 Preliminary Evaluation Report With Evaluator's Responses (found in Appendix C) Numbered

Implications of the Survey Data

The survey results clearly suggest that CEELO technical assistance is regarded as high quality, that CEELO staff members are seen as responsive, collaborative, and as sources of valuable support and capacity building.

CEELO appears to be off to a good start. However, the number of respondent comments suggesting that CEELO is not yet able to reach all of its intended audiences indicate that a priority for CEELO staff during year two should be to review CEELO's communications and outreach strategies to identify practices that should be changed and to determine if additional strategies should be deployed.

The first year's survey results also provide guidance about how to modify the survey for year two. CEELO staff and the external evaluators should begin in January to review and discuss changes to the year one survey instrument.

CEELO Client Interviews

To gain a richer understanding of the impact of CEELO's work, one hour semi-structured telephone interviews were conducted with ten recipients (out a pool of 13 potential interviewees) of CEELO technical assistance in four states: Arkansas, Kansas, Mississippi, and New Hampshire. Interviews with CEELO clients were conducted November 21 – December 6, 2013.

Eleven (of the 13 person interview pool) responded to the survey. None of the survey respondents was individually identified. However, as a group, the responses of these 11 respondents were reviewed to assess whether their responses differed from the overall survey responses. No important differences in survey patterns were noted

The in-depth interviews provided a more textured, nuanced, formative and qualitative perspective on CEELO's performance and effectiveness. The evaluators also interviewed the CEELO lead technical assistance providers associated with each of the four states (the results of which are provided in the immediately following section). This two-part approach yielded a cross reference for CEELO staff interviews and SEA personnel interviews.

A set of common, structured questions were provided to our interviewer, Elaine Duggan, who conducted 4 individual interviews and 2 group interviews, interviewing a total of 10 CEELO clients in 4 states. The interviews were focused on state agency personnel whose organizational positions ranged from staff person to program director to associate state superintendent. The most common job title was "early education program director" or the equivalent. Their tenure in their position was generally short, as would be expected from a nascent program area. The respondents' early

Elaine Duggan 1/28/14 2:49 PM

Comment [1]: #1

Jim 1/28/14 2:49 PM

Comment [2]: Were no RCC staff also interviewed?

Elaine Duggan 1/28/14 2:49 PM

Comment [3]: #1

education expertise ranged from substantial to neophyte and their state agency experience and expertise was also variable.

Did CEELO do what you expected?

This first structured question was directly focused on the primary CEELO goal of providing the support the state said they needed. The interviewees were uniformly positive in their responses albeit the type and focus of the service provided varied greatly by state.

In Arkansas, the primary activity was to assist the SEA in evaluating, researching and recommending revisions to the 2003 kindergarten readiness indicators. SEA staff was unanimous in saying CEELO “provided everything Arkansas needed” both in personal contacts and in electronic formats.

Kansas was struggling with a new law requiring early education cursive writing standards. CEELO connected them with a neighboring state and arranged visitations. They also connected Kansas with national experts and developed a positive response to the tricky area of cursive writing by preschoolers by locating cursive writing within a broader context of skills developed over time.

Mississippi is implementing a new early education law. This is the first such law in the state. Consequently, they were faced with developing an entirely new infrastructure. CEELO met their expectations by helping them develop a group of nationally prominent technical advisors, conducting research on valid and reliable program quality and child outcome assessment measures, assisting in developing a RFP for LEA applications, and helping them construct a scoring template for evaluating the proposals.

New Hampshire had three different early education directors in one year. As a result, the focus of technical assistance changed a lot during this time. The current director reports that CEELO “exceeded her expectations” and she found CEELO to be a very effective and valuable “thought partner.” One of the previous directors, now working in a different state agency, echoed the view of the current incumbent. She found CEELO to be a valuable resource for current knowledge in the field that helped sustain her energy and focus.

The interviewees in the four states all reported that CEELO met their expectations even though the range of support activities was quite diverse.

Did CEELO increase your capacity to ensure the provision of high quality early education?

In Arkansas, capacity building took the form of serving as consultants and advisors to the staff through expediting, focusing and validating their work. In particular, they were able to review and revise their kindergarten screening assessment into something more appropriate than a traditional test. CEELO brokered connections with other states that allowed them to see their problems “through different lens.”

The Kansas coordinator said her capacity as a program leader was enhanced. In particular, their Leadership Academy got underway, collegial connections in other states were formed, their assessment system began to take shape and the need for a professional development system emerged. The philosophical need for remembering the social and emotional elements of early education was re-affirmed and licensure standards for EE providers began to take shape.

Lori Connors-Tadros 1/28/14 2:49 PM

Comment [4]: For the case studies, I think it would be very helpful to describe what was expected and then present the information about whether expectations were met. The information is framed so that the reader doesn't clearly see what CEELO was attempting to do and then whether CEELO met expectations.
DS

Lori Connors-Tadros 1/28/14 2:49 PM

Comment [5]: They were not all SEA staff, would be helpful to note who you spoke to and that these were cross-agency reps

Elaine Duggan 1/28/14 2:49 PM

Comment [6]: #2

Lori Connors-Tadros 1/28/14 2:49 PM

Comment [7]: It was not a new law- this was a request by the KS state board of ed to respond to a perceived gap in the Common Core

Lori Connors-Tadros 1/28/14 2:49 PM

Comment [8]: It would be helpful to describe what CEELO provided for each of the three directors and then include ... [1]

Elaine Duggan 1/28/14 2:49 PM

Comment [9]: #3

Lori Connors-Tadros 1/28/14 2:49 PM

Comment [10]: CEELO? Can you be more specific on what you mean by focusin ... [2]

Elaine Duggan 1/28/14 2:49 PM

Comment [11]: #4

Lori Connors-Tadros 1/28/14 2:49 PM

Comment [12]: It was not a “screening assessment” but kindergarten readin ... [3]

Lori Connors-Tadros 1/28/14 2:49 PM

Comment [13]: This is not correct?

Elaine Duggan 1/28/14 2:49 PM

Comment [14]: #5

Lori Connors-Tadros 1/28/14 2:49 PM

Comment [15]: By??

Elaine Duggan 1/28/14 2:49 PM

Comment [16]: #6

Lori Connors-Tadros 1/28/14 2:49 PM

Comment [17]: Not sure what you mean by Leadership Academy?

Elaine Duggan 1/28/14 2:49 PM

Comment [18]: #7

Lori Connors-Tadros 1/28/14 2:49 PM

Comment [19]: This doesn't actually make any sense, this is not what we did?

Elaine Duggan 1/28/14 2:49 PM

Comment [20]: #8

Mississippi early educators also felt their capacity was increased. The topical webinars and networking were of the most value to them. Their expertise in assessment was also advanced.

New Hampshire profited by having expert speakers arranged and strategic planning support provided. Although not strictly a CEELO issue, the state coordinator felt far more coordination was needed for licensing and articulation across the human services and education sectors of state government (This state Constitutional separation of authority was viewed as problematic). Competency based report cards, program articulation for half-day programs, and a new website exemplified CEELO's raising of their goals and aspirations, and of CEELO "producing enduring tools."

The theme that comes through across the four case-study states is that of expanding horizons; the visibility of new ideas and colleagues, and a sense of empowerment of individuals to see and do things that had not previously conceptualized.

What was the impact of CEELO technical assistance on your state's policy and its practices?

In this area, the interviewee responses were shorter but represented a more concrete set of accomplishments (as contrasted with the valuable process outcomes).

In Arkansas, the policy decisions and regulations had already been completed. The task was to implement the program that took the form of revising content to align with the common core state standards. The group also generated an "early learning framework" that is a key information tool for the public, parents and educators.

Kansas' primary goal was to develop a set of handwriting standards for preschoolers that was appropriate in content and form. This goal was accomplished and it is scheduled for state board approval in December 2013. The pre-vote feedback has been positive. Another impact is that Kansas now has expertise to develop standards in other areas. They have developed a new level of autonomy.

Perhaps Mississippi's greatest accomplishment is to have developed and implemented a small EE program where none existed before. Their task was to take a brand-new law and implement it. This meant assisting in developing a state capacity. CEELO became a key advisor in building an infrastructure.

New Hampshire does not separately fund pre-school although the area is growing by leaps and bounds. The state receives many requests for technical assistance and a great deal of latent energy has been stored which will ultimately be released. Both respondents expressed the feeling that state support (and staff reductions) has had the effect of thwarting or erasing some of the positive energy in this area.

What do you need from CEELO in the future?

The resource materials and webinars provided by CEELO were viewed as valuable and interviewees thought they should be continued.

Lori Connors-Tadros 1/28/14 2:49 PM

Comment [21]: By?

Elaine Duggan 1/28/14 2:49 PM

Comment [22]: #9

Lori Connors-Tadros 1/28/14 2:49 PM

Comment [23]: Which ones?

Elaine Duggan 1/28/14 2:49 PM

Comment [24]: #10

Jim 1/28/14 2:49 PM

Comment [25]: Would expect that the formation of a Technical Advisory Committee composed of national experts to surface. Details are lacking as well as CEELO's collaboration with the SE Comprehensive Center and Alliance for Early Success. Too vague but can't determine how to go back to capture more details.

Elaine Duggan 1/28/14 2:49 PM

Comment [26]: #11

Lori Connors-Tadros 1/28/14 2:49 PM

Comment [27]: CEELO did not produce competency based report cards. This sentence is a bit confusing. It would be helpful to clearly list what issues the state is working on, what CEELO did, and whether CEELO built capacity to address the state issues.
DS

Elaine Duggan 1/28/14 2:49 PM

Comment [28]: #12

Lori Connors-Tadros 1/28/14 2:49 PM

Comment [29]: In this section, I think it would be really great to see very con... [4]

Elaine Duggan 1/28/14 2:49 PM

Comment [30]: #13

Lori Connors-Tadros 1/28/14 2:49 PM

Comment [31]: This is not at all co... [5]

Elaine Duggan 1/28/14 2:49 PM

Comment [32]: #14

Lori Connors-Tadros 1/28/14 2:49 PM

Comment [33]: It would be helpful ... [6]

Elaine Duggan 1/28/14 2:49 PM

Comment [34]: #15

Lori Connors-Tadros 1/28/14 2:49 PM

Comment [35]: It would be helpful ... [7]

Elaine Duggan 1/28/14 2:49 PM

Comment [36]: #16

Lori Connors-Tadros 1/28/14 2:49 PM

Comment [37]: In what area? I thir... [8]

Elaine Duggan 1/28/14 2:49 PM

Comment [38]: #17

Now that Arkansas has completed their standards, all the materials, curriculum, brochures, lesson plans, etc. will have to be revised. The teachers, by and large, will need extensive professional development.

Kansas faces the same dilemma. They are uncertain as to how to implement the standards without teachers "freaking-out" about cursive writing for pre-school students. These standards place a new emphasis on fine-motor and oral communications and will require statewide professional development.

While Mississippi did not explicitly state these as future needs; evaluating RFPs, making awards and implementing programs at the local level appear to be the next set of challenges.

New Hampshire held a "power summit" with CEELO and the regional center, and state leaders referenced the aim of a common plan but no specifics were provided.

The Comprehensive Centers

The relationships between centers, SEAs, and CEELO varied by location and nature of the involvement also varied as a function of personal relationships, and the professional focus and expertise of the individuals involved. While the formal lines of communication appear to have some ambiguity, no respondent reported this as a problem.

In Arkansas, the center was viewed as a partner and a conduit for contacts and information. In Kansas, CEELO was seen as the EE knowledge provider while the center contributed in terms of literacy and operations. The operative word was, again, partner. Mississippi relied on the Florida Center for Reading Research and reported that both CEELO and the center attended meetings with the center in an administrative role. The theme of CEELO being the EE experts and the centers being the administrative arm was again repeated in New Hampshire.

Conclusions from the client interviews

The services and expertise provided by CEELO supported a remarkable range of early education and state operational activities. This required that the CEELO staff be flexible and nimble in developing activities and providing services that ranged across such diverse needs as identifying best practices, providing research evidence, program administration advice, and the like.

Several respondents noted the natural organizational tensions between a particular state's culture and that of an "outside" group of advisors. On one hand, CEELO lpped the level of the states' game and their level of expectations for themselves. On the other, CEELO had to respect the culture of the state and the state agency. CEELO people are well aware of this dynamic and have wisely adopted a "wait until invited" approach rather than inviting themselves in.

A somewhat related issue is that some materials were seen to be generic while the climate of each state is unique. However, the respondents indicated that the services provided were appropriate and tailored to the unique needs of their individual state. The interview data suggest that CEELO staff have done a good job of adapting materials and tailoring services to meet the needs and interests of clients in different states.

Overall the respondents were effusive and used positive language when describing and rating CEELO and its staff. Common to all the states were the reports of positive collegiality. In addition to

Lori Connors-Tadros 1/28/14 2:49 PM

Comment [39]: Kindergarten readiness indicators

Lori Connors-Tadros 1/28/14 2:49 PM

Comment [40]: Can you expand on this?? What did the state say they needed from CEELO?

DS-It would be great to include some of the indicators - showing CEELO's impact on their work.

Elaine Duggan 1/28/14 2:49 PM

Comment [41]: #18

Lori Connors-Tadros 1/28/14 2:49 PM

Comment [42]: Poor word choice

Elaine Duggan 1/28/14 2:49 PM

Comment [43]: #19

Lori Connors-Tadros 1/28/14 2:49 PM

Comment [44]: DS-This sounds like Kansas has the same standards as Arkansas. I think it would be helpful to list the specific standards that CEELO helped develop and then provide very specific recommendations about what the sta ... [9]

Elaine Duggan 1/28/14 2:49 PM

Comment [45]: #20

Jim 1/28/14 2:49 PM

Comment [46]: They had previous ... [10]

Elaine Duggan 1/28/14 2:49 PM

Comment [47]: #21

Lori Connors-Tadros 1/28/14 2:49 PM

Comment [48]: I think this minim ... [11]

Elaine Duggan 1/28/14 2:49 PM

Comment [49]: #22

Jim 1/28/14 2:49 PM

Comment [50]: Not accurate. CEE ... [12]

Elaine Duggan 1/28/14 2:49 PM

Comment [51]: #23

Lori Connors-Tadros 1/28/14 2:49 PM

Comment [52]: We intentionally ... [13]

Jim 1/28/14 2:49 PM

Comment [53]: Understand comp ... [14]

Lori Connors-Tadros 1/28/14 2:49 PM

Comment [54]: What does this mean?

Elaine Duggan 1/28/14 2:49 PM

Comment [55]: #24

Lori Connors-Tadros 1/28/14 2:49 PM

Comment [56]: This is very unclear...

Elaine Duggan 1/28/14 2:49 PM

Comment [57]: Also #24

technical advice, it was clear that professional relationships were formed that sustained and supported state personnel as they ventured into new territory.

CEELO Staff Interviews

As has been noted, CEELO clients in the four case study states (Arkansas, Kansas, Mississippi, and New Hampshire) gave CEELO high marks for networking effectively, collaborating effectively, and for being flexible and responsive to local needs. Clients also found the substantive support (i.e. - research evidence, best practices information) provided by CEELO staff to be of high quality, to be well targeted on their needs, and to have been provided in a manner that made it practical to utilize.

Four lead members of the CEELO staff were interviewed on December 9, 2013. These staff members were able to identify specific examples from their work that demonstrated the qualities noted in both the survey responses and the client interviews. This three-way agreement indicates that client and staff perceptions of the nature and quality of the first-year work done by CEELO are highly congruent.

CEELO staff conveyed a picture of an EE technical assistance landscape in which the roles of the state, the regional centers and of CEELO are still evolving. Generally, CEELO's focus is more on content while that of the regional centers is more on organizational support and development. That said, all of the staff members indicated in one way or another that their roles required them to be careful listeners, to be willing to modify their initial thinking and approaches, and to use a gentle touch focused primarily on the pragmatic aspects of what was to be accomplished rather than on philosophical boundaries and points of conflict.

CEELO staff reported learning a great deal about state-specific issues and then using that knowledge to search out appropriate and effective connections to the research base as well as to practices in other states. They also provided psychological support and re-assurance to state staff members who were often new to their tasks, working with inadequate resources, and/or in departments with high rates of staff turnover. In New Hampshire, for example, the requested technical assistance shifted frequently as three different EE directors occupied the position over the course of the year. Another complicating factor is that in some states the responsibility for early education programs is divided among different state agencies adding an additional dimension to the networking and collaboration.

The CEELO website was not launched until March of this year. It may be expected to play a larger role in buttressing CEELO's intensive field based support. It will be important to identify how the site fits into the overall strategic thinking of CEELO and to establish benchmarks for client engagement with the website. Webinars are a potentially powerful technical assistance tool. However, as one staff member observed, webinars are "flooding the market." Within that context CEELO should have a clear plan for the coming year that details the overall number, content, schedule and audiences. It is also important that CEELO support staff manage the logistics of the webinars so that invitations and notices are sent and followed up on in a timely fashion.

CEELO does not have its own newsletter. However, it does reach a wide audience through its front-page placement in the NIEER newsletter. This seems like an effective use of CEELO's resources.

The survey data, client interview, and staff interview data are highly congruent. These data indicate that CEELO staff members have established solid working relationships with SEA staff and that CEELO staff members are focused on CEELO's goal of increasing state capacity. However, it was also clear that CEELO was, at times, providing technical assistance to state agencies whose personnel lacked the knowledge or the resources to accomplish the tasks which they had been charged to accomplish. Given that state resources are often insufficient, existing capacity is minimal, and administrative infrastructure is weak, it will be an ongoing challenge for CEELO to help create significant increases in state capacity. There is a danger that CEELO staff may, in effect, begin to function as SEA support staff, and that when CEELO technical assistance is no longer available, the SEA's will simply stop doing those things made possible by CEELO's support.

Discussion and Conclusions

Year One Evaluation –

The survey results and the four in-depth case studies indicate that CEELO has successfully achieved its primary goal of providing needed support and increasing the capacity of state education agencies. The services provided were well received by early educators and state directors.

CEELO assistance took the forms of providing effective networking, consultation on particular projects, collaboration, and the collection and dissemination of research knowledge. This has placed a premium on flexibility and responsiveness. The breadth of the topical areas has ranged across the spectrum of program development, professional development, assessment and management domains.

CEELO's impact in year one is evident in concrete contributions to outcomes such as new state standards, the development of readiness checklists, and the establishment of collaborative relationships among stakeholders.

Evaluation Issues for Year Two

For the coming year, CEELO will need to continue its activities in the four target states (and doubtlessly with other states) as the initiatives, described in earlier sections of this report, reach the next step in their development.

As relates to the role of the evaluators in year two, a number questions emerge. For example:

- Will the broad survey again be conducted? We recommend that it be updated as needed and re-administered.
- Will the same four focus states be followed? The obvious advantage is longitudinal information but new states and priorities may also emerge.
- Will the evaluation need to focus, in part, on the *Leadership Academy* program?
- Will monthly (or bimonthly) telephone calls with the evaluators be needed as part of the formative evaluation process and to ensure that the evaluation process and CEELO's strategic goals are closely linked?
- Will the evaluation frame used this year be continued or modified in some fashion?

It will be important for the external evaluators and the CEELO leadership team to establish the framework for the year-two evaluation early on. We recommend that the goal be to have the year-two evaluation framework established by the end of January 2014.

Emerging Policy and Focus Issues for Year Two

Broadly viewed, the information received in the course of this evaluation suggests certain policy issues will require attention from CEELO in the coming year(s). For example:

- The professional development capacity that SEAs are able to provide to LEAs will be key. The demand is increasing exponentially. Expect the call for content and qualitative criteria for PD to emerge.
- Closely related to PD is the licensing of providers. The definitions of essential knowledge, skills, proficiencies and assessments will likely emerge on the policy agenda.
- Program dissemination and the building of local organizational capacities, already underway, will demand attention in this rapidly expanding area.
- The proper role and use of assessment measures is an issue. There is a political push for high-stakes student and program evaluation. For example, formative screening may morph into sorting in some states. This will have to be approached, technically, ethically and philosophically.
- The relationship between private and public providers will continue to be an issue. What are the proper state monitoring, licensing, evaluation, and enforcement procedures? How are high quality programs, operational strength and fiscal integrity assured?

It will be important at the start of year two for CEELO staff to determine, clearly articulate and memorialize, and then focus on those policy issues staff members consider to be most salient. The process of doing this can be part of establishing the year-two evaluation framework.

APPENDIX C

Evaluator Responses to Staff Comments on 1-15-14 Preliminary Evaluation Report

Comment 1: We were given the names of people to interview by CEELO staff.

Comment 2: Whom we spoke with:

Arkansas:

Tracy Tucker, 12/3/13, Director of Curriculum and Instruction, AR DOE

and

Jackie Dedman, 12/3/13 (same call), Director, AR Head Start Collaboration Office

and

Tonya Williams, 12/3/13 (same call), Division Director, Division of Child Care and Early Childhood Education, AR DOE

and

Paige Cox, 12/3/13 (same call), Arkansas Better Chance/State Pre-K Director, DHS Division of Child Care and Early Childhood Education

Kansas:

Kris Shaw, 11/21/13, Language Arts and Literacy Consultant, KS State DOE

Gayle Stuber, 12/3/13, Early Childhood Coordinator, KS State DOE

Mississippi:

Robin Lemonis, 11/26/13, Office Director for Dyslexia, Literacy, and Early Childhood, MS DOE, Early Education Division

and

Trecina Green, 11/26/13 (same call), Associate Superintendent, MS DOE, Early Education Division

New Hampshire:

Mary Earick, 11/26/13, Early Childhood Specialist, Director of Title I, NH DOE

Patty Ewan, 12/6/13, Early Childhood Specialist, NH DOE (no longer holds this position)

Comment 3: Regarding “what CEELO provided for each of the three directors and then include information about whether the expectations were met”:

The answers given by Mary Earick on 11/26 and Patty Ewan on 12/6 appear to speak to this question (only 2 directors were interviewed, not 3)

Comment 4: Regarding “CEELO? Can you be more specific on what you mean by focusing and validating your work?”:

Yes, CEELO. In the group interview on 12/3, the respondents Tracy Tucker, Jackie Dedman, Tonya Williams, and Paige Cox said that the capacity provided by CEELO “expedited and validated” their work and ensured that they “were on the right track”, and “being steered in the right direction”. The rest of their interview provided more detail.

Comment 5: Re “It was not a “screening assessment” but kindergarten readiness indicators for parents and practitioners”:

The group’s answer to question 2 (Did CEELO increase your capacity to ensure the provision of high-quality early education) was, in part: “In coming years, in working with CEELO, some things will hinge on the announcement about Race to the Top. Arkansas wrote a significant piece about their current kindergarten screening, and replaced it with something more appropriate. They would like to use CEELO as a resource, because CEELO has now already done the background piece with Arkansas.”

Comment 6: Re “By??”:

The interview question was about CEELO.

Comment 7: Re Leadership Academy:

Per Gayle Stuber’s interview on 12/3, she mentioned the Academy twice in her answer to question 2 (Did CEELO increase your capacity to ensure the provision of high-quality early education?) She said that “one of the things CEELO does is support that particular group, working with specialists around the Leadership Academy” and she is “hopeful that the Leadership Academy will be good”.

Comment 8: Re "...this is not what we did?"

Per Kris Shaw's interview on 11/21, in answer to question 2 (Did CEELO increase your capacity to ensure the provision of high-quality early education), she said that they were now working more on the bridge between early fine motor skills and cognitive development and later handwriting, and a part of that includes "licensure standards for birth-kindergarten..."

Comment 9: Re "By?":

The whole interview is about CEELO. It is obvious that when discussing effects of the CEELO's TA, the respondents are referring to CEELO.

Comment 10: Re "Which ones"?

The respondents did not say which ones.

Comment 11: Re "Would expect that the formation of a Technical Advisory Committee composed of national experts to surface. Details are lacking as well as CEELO's collaboration with the SE Comprehensive Center and Alliance for Early Success. Too vague but can't determine how to go back to capture more details."

It did not surface, other than, perhaps in the Robin Lemonis and Trecina Green interview (on 11/26) when they mentioned the Technical Advisory Committee but the focus of the question was the ways in which they found their capacity most increased.

Comment 12: Re "CEELO did not produce competency based report cards. This sentence is a bit confusing. It would be helpful to clearly list what issues the state is working on, what CEELO did, and whether CEELO built capacity to address the state issues."

Patty Ewan's response (12/6) to question 2 (Did CEELO increase your capacity to ensure the provision of high-quality early education) included, "CEELO drove the Office of Early Childhood (her) to construct and leave things in place that were timeless, including competency report cards for primary grades..."

Comment 13: Re: "In this section, I think it would be really great to see very concrete examples of changes in specific policies with pull out quotes and boxes showing changes in state-produced documents and quotes about CEELO's role in producing the documents. Also, it would be terrific to see very detailed changes in practices such as changes in working relationships across state agencies, ways that the state is providing TA to districts, etc."

The interview questions developed in collaboration with CEELO staff did not ask for this specific information.

Comment 14: Re “This is not at all correct or related to what I did- I am confused?”

Please see the answers to the questions asked on 12/3 of Tracy Tucker, Jackie Dedman, Tonya Williams and Paige Cox.

Comment 15: Re “helpful to explain what this means”

Mary Earick stated on 11/26 that “In New Hampshire, preschool is not funded. That said, what they do is offer enough technical assistance that preschool is growing at an unbelievable rate.”

Comment 16: “Both respondents expressed the feeling that state support (and staff reductions) has had the effect of thwarting or erasing some of the positive energy in this area.”

What this means is that CEELO responded to a great number of requests and assisted in the development of NH capacity whether in administrative capacity or EE knowledge. This was generally seen as “capacity building.” Unfortunately, NH is weakly staffed and is “one-deep.” With three different directors in one year, this enhanced capacity was essentially lost to the state and high turn-over erases the knowledge base as well as the institutional momentum.

Comment 17: Re “In what area? I think it would be helpful to describe the assistance around K-3 that CELO (sic) provided.”

Patty Ewan in her interview of 12/6 discussed the discouragement of lesser state support in the area of early childhood education. Her response to question 3 (What was the impact of CEELO technical assistance on your state’s policy and on its practices?) was “None.” The example for that is the fact that as a State Dept. of Education, NH went from a full-time early childhood education position (hers) to a part-time one. Patty found this discouraging. There are some things happening in which they say they’re going forward, but none of those things have actually moved forward. Patty’s group didn’t really talk about policy-level things, but more program-level issues.” Patty Ewan and Mary Earick both discussed the assistance they received from CEELO in other parts of the interview.

Comment 18: Re “Can you expand on this?? What did the state say they needed from CEELO?”

The answer regarding what the state needs was: “After their work is approved, Arkansas is going to have to revise all their materials such as their brochure, the calendar, etc. Their work will need to be embedded into all their materials and their professional development in the most appropriate way, as an outside resource to help guide their work.

In the K-12 world, they must get their early childhood teachers, kindergarten specifically, to have an understanding of what their readiness is. The teachers “don’t have a clue” now as to readiness. Now that they will have kindergarten and pre-K at the table, they want to keep going with their readiness work to give them as thorough an understanding as possible.”

Comment 19: Re “poor word choice”

A direct quote from Gayle Stuber’s interview on 12/3 was how CEELO can probably help her “not to freak out” in saying the word “handwriting” to teachers of 3-year-olds.

Comment 20: Re “I think it would be helpful to list the specific standards that CEELO helped develop and then provide very specific recommendations about what the state would like from CEELO to support their implementation.”

Though we can list the specific standards CEELO helped with from the case studies, again, we can only be as specific as the respondents were in their interviews.

Comment 21: Re “They had previously expressed a desire in how to roll-out PD for participating programs on enhancing quality and using self-assessment/accountability measures.”

Regardless of the original goal, the response during the interview was what we had to go by.

Comment 22: Re “I think this minimizes our role- I both facilitated decision making and provided research, the Comp Ctr liaison served as the logistic coordinator??”

The comment (in answer to question 4, As you know the technical assistance you received was provided in partnership between CEELO and the South Central Comprehensive Center. To what extent did their joint efforts add to the impact of all you have described in the previous questions?) by those interviewed on 12/3 was that Sharon Brooks from the South Central Comprehensive Center helped facilitate the communication between Arkansas and what they needed, wanted and expected from Lori. So Sharon helped bridge the communication between CEELO and the state, and kept them up to date on the work each was doing.

Comment 23: Re “Not accurate. CEELO did not participate in any meeting with FL Ctr for Reading Research. Perhaps the greatest aspect for MS was the collaborative effort between SE CC and CEELO in identifying TA needs, planning and convening the Tech Advisory Committee w/ the Alliance for Early Success.”

Again, we can only go by what was said in answer to the questions.

Comment 24: Kris Shaw, in her interview on 11/21, explained her viewpoint in the answer to State-Specific question 3, “Are there any other comments you’d like to make as we examine the effectiveness of CEELO’s engagement with you and your department? Or, are there any ways you would suggest that CEELO improve its technical assistance process or support?” Her response:

CEELO had never helped with writing a set of standards before, and so were learning the process along with them. Kris believes that they came in thinking Kansas had a very structured process, but it wasn’t it as structured as CEELO wanted it to be. She felt it was difficult to get that idea across to them, that there are steps they’re going through with the whole process of writing the standards (which happens only every seven years), opening them up to public comment, sending them to the board, working on revisions – CEELO wanted a set date that it would be done but that was difficult to provide.

Kris felt that CEELO wanted Kansas to give them a packaged, set way that they write standards, despite the fluid process involved in the writing, dependent on when committees can meet, how much knowledge they have, etc. Many people who work on standards writing are friends, so one has to allow for chit-chat, etc. Kris felt that CEELO people were a bit impatient and formal at first; she thinks they need to realize that they’re coming into an established group with its own dynamics. There was a feeling that CEELO people were a bit frustrated with Kansas because they were so casual. She felt an “I’m from Washington DC” vibe while she and her group were “merely from small-town Kansas”.

That said, however, the committee was “whipped into shape”, and needed to know that they were working with professionals, which was CEELO’s role, and it was an effective one. They were able to get on the same page quickly, since CEELO set the framework and tone at the very beginning. They gave Kansas the focus that they’re writing a set of standards to help with communication, not just forming perfect letters, but more about how to get children to communicate through handwriting. That was their job, and it was done well right from the start.