



NAECS-SDE: Listserv Summary

State Approaches to Regional Early Childhood Councils

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This document summarizes responses provided to a query posted to the [National Association of Early Childhood Specialists in State Departments of Education \(NAECS-SDE\) listserv](#), which is used by members to make announcements, survey states about resources, and gain information on key policy questions. Summaries are not intended for official reports or research, as the information shared is voluntary and not verified as official statements from states. If a member wishes to use summaries for official reports or research, explicit permission must be granted.

Information Request:

PDG TA posed a question around state supports for regional councils to the listserv for consideration in March, 2017:

Does your state support a system of regional early childhood councils or coalitions whose only functions are advocacy and communication at the local level?

Goal of Request

The [Preschool Development Grant](#) Technical Assistance (PDG TA) project at AEM Corporation received a request from a PDG development grantee for information concerning which states have developed systems of regional early childhood councils or coalitions. The request asks states if a regional early childhood system is in place, and if so, what functions do these regional entities have and how are they funded. The state making the request for information was interested in finding out how states with comparable systems fund the coordination and technical assistance that states provide regional councils.

PDG TA and CEELO worked collaboratively to gather the information to answer these questions. Regional early childhood councils perform a wide range of functions. In some states, they work as an arm of state government, while in others their primary functions are advocacy and communication at the community level. CEELO and PDG TA wanted to identify the funding structures and sources used for these councils.

Background & Context

Many states have supported the development of regional collaboratives or councils intended to connect local communities to the state and to each other. The overarching reasons states have built these community-based entities is to give a voice and some control to communities to support their own services and initiatives. States also acknowledge the unique needs of the young children and their families are known best at the local level. These local or regional entities are a vehicle to communicate these needs to not only others within the community, but also to state leadership.

Regional or local early childhood councils or coalitions serve a wide-range of purposes, from advocacy and communication to coordinating state initiatives, informing policy, and/or implementing state initiatives and policies (e.g., determining eligibility for child care subsidies). These councils typically have different sources of funding that may affect the councils' roles and responsibilities. Councils with state funding may be tasked with duties similar to state agencies, such as regional data collection, delivering technical assistance, and facilitating professional development opportunities.

In our national scan of regional or local early childhood councils, we found much variation in the councils' responsibilities, governance structures, and funding mechanisms. Regional early childhood councils or coalitions also differ in their operational definition of "early childhood." Some councils focus on children birth to age five, or birth through third grade, or children from preschool through third grade. Additionally, there are differences in the councils' expectations and the roles for families. However, there are some commonalities as well.

All regional or community-based councils typically have some state core requirements (e.g., membership, responsibilities, accountability) as well as an allowance for some local variation¹. State governments provide some level of financial support, technical assistance, and leadership to the regional councils. Communication loops among the regional councils and between them and the state are common, although the effectiveness of the communication loops varies. Data collection and sharing are common roles for most regional or community-based councils².

Responses

PDG TA and CEELO received responses from 11 states to the March 2017 listserv inquiry. Findings from these responses include:

- Ten states (AZ, CT, CO, DC, ID, IA, KY, MD, MI, WI) reported having local early childhood related councils, usually referred to as either regional councils or early childhood councils
- One state reported no regional councils (LA)
- Five of the 11 states (CT, CO, DC, IA, MI) responding to the query reported having regional councils that engage in advocacy and communication work such as reporting local needs to the

¹ [BUILD Initiative: State/Local Systems](#)

² [BUILD Initiative: State/Local Systems](#)

state, collaborating with private partners, coordinating programs, and sharing the importance of funding high quality early childhood programs.

- Several states responding to the query (i.e., CO, DC, FL, IA, NE, OR, and WA) operate their regional councils as public-private partnerships, funded through grants. The states fund this effort through several state agencies, or blend and braid state and federal grants; these states are CA, ID, KY, MD, MI, VT, and WI.

The table on the following page includes verbatim responses from states that participated in the listserv and describes their states’ requirements. Links to specific state resources and tools are included where applicable.

This information was collected in March 2017 and, therefore, some resources and links may not be up-to-date. Updates can be sent to info@ceelo.org.

State	Response/Relevant Links	Additional Information
Arizona	<p>Arizona’s tobacco tax-funded initiative, First Things First, which also serves on the Early Childhood Development & Health Board, is a quasi-state agency. It operates on a regional structure. Information can be found at www.firstthingsfirst.org. Here is what their website says about their regional councils:</p> <p>Grassroots Leadership</p> <p>The 28 First Things First regional partnership councils – each made up of local volunteers – study the unique needs of its Arizona community and decide how funds will be used to best support its young children and families. Each regional council member represents a specific segment of the community that has a stake in ensuring that children arrive at kindergarten prepared to succeed, including parents, educators, business leaders, tribal representatives, health professionals, philanthropists and leaders of faith communities.</p>	<p>BUILD: Arizona’s First Things First Initiative</p>
Connecticut	<p>Legislation requires that communities receiving funding for OEC funded preschool (School Readiness) have a local School Readiness Council (SRC) that is jointly convened by the superintendent of schools and the city/town’s chief elected official. There are specific requirements in legislation for who must comprise the council (e.g. parents, representatives from local programs, the McKinney Vento designee, a local health care provider, etc.). The SRC is charged with making recommendations regarding the grant program, fostering partnerships, disseminating information, etc. Councils may be for one city/town or can be regional. The purpose of the SRCs goes beyond advocacy and communication.</p>	

State	Response/Relevant Links	Additional Information
Colorado	The system in Colorado isn't solely focused on advocacy and communication, but there are 31 Early Childhood Councils. They have a variety of funders including the CCDF.	Early Childhood Councils Colorado's Early Childhood Councils collaborate with public and private stakeholders to create an early childhood system of services. Tasks include applying for early childhood funding, developing plans to respond to local needs, establishing accountability systems, and communicating to the state.
DC	DC funds, convenes, and staffs a local group, The Birth to Three Policy Alliance, for the purpose of advocacy and communication about birth to three issues. Learn more here .	
Idaho	Idaho has Regional Infant Toddler Coordinating Councils in 7 regions of the state. These councils are funded through the Part C grant.	
Iowa	Iowa has a broad system building enterprise, called Early Childhood Iowa that includes a number of state and local councils and groups, including a broad stakeholder alliance that involves both the public and private sectors. At its best, it is a wonderful state-private partnership for communication, coordination and collaboration. It certainly has a broad communication role. The issue of advocacy has always been tricky because of the strong role played by executive branch employees, bureaus and departments. However, because the state has fostered and encouraged strong stakeholder engagement, there are a number of organizations who are actively involved in ECI committees who do advocacy on their own, and ECI itself sponsors an annual Day on the Hill event. The groups doing explicit advocacy often share plans and positions with ECI, and use the group to refine their positions and arguments. So that serves as both a communication and education function for our early childhood systems building work. Funding for ECI comes through minimal state support.	BUILD: Early Childhood Iowa
Kentucky	Kentucky has local early childhood councils, but they are not involved with advocacy. They are involved with communication.	Kentucky Community Early Childhood Councils

State	Response/Relevant Links	Additional Information
Louisiana	Louisiana has an Early Childhood Advisory Council for programs serving publicly-funded children ages birth to five, but it is a state-level entity and does not operate at a regional level. Its function is to review and make recommendations for policy.	
Maryland	Maryland has, aside from a State Advisory Council of Early Childhood Education, early childhood councils in each of the 24 counties since 2013.	Local Early Childhood Advisory Councils (LECACs)
Michigan	<p>Michigan has 54 Great Start Collaboratives covering all 83 counties, encouraging a cross-system approach focused on impacting the overarching early childhood outcomes that were identified when the Executive Order formed the Office of Great Start. While all of the GSCs pre-date the establishment of the Office of Great Start, their 3-year Strategic Plans and annual Action Agendas align their activities to the population-level data aimed to address the areas in which they hope to have an impact, while annually monitoring results. Each of the GSCs have a paid Parent Liaison who ensures engagement of parents at the GSC table, as well as convening a Great Start Parent Coalition, of which there are currently 60 (some of the multi-county GSCs have more than one GSPC). The GSC/PC annually identifies parent-led strategies for addressing the desired results, and also contributes to the conversations regarding the use of some of the funding for programming (vs maintenance of the necessary infrastructure that supports collaboration).</p> <p>Having this network also is important to ensure communication and coordination around a variety of initiatives. To name a few:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Each of the 56 local service areas for Part C of IDEA, known in Michigan as Early On also convene a Local Interagency Coordinating Council, which are also connected to the GSC. • The Great Start Readiness Program (Michigan’s state-funded preschool program) must assure that they have an advisory committee that is connected to the GSC. • Each of the 10 Great Start to Quality Resource Centers (resource & referral for parents/providers) is required to have an advisory group, in the majority, are connected to the GSCs through a balanced/focused approach. 	BUILD: Michigan’s Great Start Initiative

State	Response/Relevant Links	Additional Information
	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Michigan’s Maternal Infant Early Childhood Home Visiting (MIECHV) funded programs connect their required Local Leadership Groups to the GSC/PCs. <p>The core funding for the GSC/PCs is a combination of state school aid and CCDF and is managed out of the Office of Early Childhood Development & Family Education by NAECS-SDE Michigan members. Additional CCDF is designated for the Early Childhood Investment Corporation (ECIC) to provide training and technical assistance to the GSC/GSPCs.</p> <p>The state is also about to launch a RTT-ELC funded grant opportunity for the GSPCs to identify and support “Trusted Advisors,” aimed at reaching populations of families hardest to reach with messages about the importance of the early years.</p>	
Wisconsin	<p>Wisconsin has a regional structure for communication and collaboration that is funded by several different funding streams. The structure is based on part-time Regional Collaboration Coaches who work with regional action teams to share information and collaborate on resources and professional development. The action teams have small grants to support local efforts. They don’t really involve themselves with advocacy. More information can be found here.</p>	<p>Regional Networks and Collaboration Coaches</p>

Other States with Early Childhood Regional Councils:

Additional research was conducted to gain a better understanding of other states that are doing similar work outside the query beyond advocacy and communication.

California’s [Local Child Care and Development Planning Councils](#) work to address the child care needs of families. These responsibilities include identifying local funding priorities, fostering local partnerships, coordinating programs and services, and collaborating with other initiatives.

The [Delaware Readiness Teams](#) are supported by a collaboration of several private partners such as early childhood programs, educators, and community and business leaders. The teams are tasked with developing action plans using information based on child assessments to determine their communities’ needs.

Florida’s [Regional Coalitions](#) are responsible for delivering local services, such as assisting with applications for child care services, enrolling in preschool, and providing research and information on

early education resources. The regional coalitions are nonprofits that use local private and public partnerships.

Nebraska's [Early Learning Connection Regional Partnerships](#) is grant-funded through the Nebraska Department of Education and supports professional development for early childhood educators and community engagement and outreach.

Oregon's 16 [Early Learning Hubs](#) are a partnership between the state's Early Learning Division and other cross-sector partners working together to provide programs and services for families in all regions to better streamline services and communicate regional needs to the state.

Vermont's Early Childhood Advisory Council, Building Bright Futures, operates several [regional councils](#) that organize and engage communities in tying solutions at the local level with effective state policy. Local, state, and federal funds are used to offer technical support to ensure high-quality early childhood services.

Washington's Early Learning Partnership, which includes Thrive By Five, the Department of Early Learning, and the Office of Superintendent of Public Instruction created 10 [Early Learning Regional Coalitions](#). The coalitions help organize outreach and advocacy based on regional needs, and aligned with statewide priorities.

Conclusion

The responses received indicate the tasks of regional early childhood councils vary across states. Some regional councils may engage in advocacy and communications work, while others may focus on governance, strategic planning, and implementing state policies. More research will need to be done to determine the various funding sources and roles regional councils across the nation have, as well as specific information about how they work in partnership with the state on behalf of young children and families.

For additional information on regional councils, see the BUILD Initiative's work on and [State and Local Systems](#) and [Transformation Zones - an Early Learning Improvement Strategy](#) from ELCTA.

ABOUT CEELO:

One of 22 Comprehensive Centers funded by the U.S. Department of Education’s Office of Elementary and Secondary Education, the Center on Enhancing Early Learning Outcomes (CEELO) will strengthen the capacity of State Education Agencies (SEAs) to lead sustained improvements in early learning opportunities and outcomes. CEELO will work in partnership with SEAs, state and local early childhood leaders, and other federal and national technical assistance (TA) providers to promote innovation and accountability.

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ABOUT PDG TA:

The Preschool Development Grant Technical Assistance (PDG TA) project, AEM Corporation Education Division, provides technical expertise and support to Preschool Development Grant (PDG) states. PDG TA is funded through a cooperative agreement with the US Departments of Education and Health and Human Services to work with PDG funded (Development) states through intensive technical assistance, along with general TA to all PDG grantees through online communities of practice and webinars on topical issues, targeted TA documents, and online access to resources.

<https://pdg.grads360.org/#program>

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