

# ELC Executive Committee Survey Summary – July 2015

---

## Table of Contents

<b>SYSTEM GOALS</b>	<b>1</b>
<b>STRUCTURAL ASSETS AND BARRIERS</b>	<b>4</b>
<b>WORKING IN CURRENT SYSTEM</b>	<b>6</b>
<b>DOWNSIDES TO CURRENT SYSTEM</b>	<b>7</b>
<b>WORKING/NOT WORKING REVISIONS AND CAVEATS</b>	<b>8</b>
<b>SINGLE MOST IMPORTANT OUTCOME</b>	<b>10</b>

## System Goals

Previously agreed upon systems goals include equitable access, effectiveness, and sustainability. When asked to rank the system goals most in order of most needing improvement, responses were varied. Half of respondents (9) ranked Equitable Access the top priority. This seems to represent the collective acknowledgement and agreement that we are not reaching the children with the greatest need for services yet and some urgency to realign the system to address this issue.

When asked what, specifically, needs to be improved in order to achieve each of the three systems goal areas, responses varied in focus on populations, structure, programs, and geography. The most frequently cited systems gaps included limited funding and capacity (especially as it relates to statewide data), a lack of alignment between systems, especially funding streams, and inequitable access across geography and for the most at-risk populations.

The following summarizes the areas of challenge as well as potential solutions by each goal area.

### **Equitable Access – Issues**

We have a clear vision as a state of prioritizing the highest risk children and families yet we still only seem able to reach moderate risk families. We do not have a clear, coherent, cross funding stream approach for achieving equitable access. Issues are:

- Siloed approach
- Mismatch between current program models and the need of the families we are trying to reach

- eligibility guidelines, program hours (half day PFA not adequate, need for non-traditional work hour programs), program requirements, transportation, location, culturally relevant programs (bilingual, diverse staff)
- dearth of infant toddler services and underfunded infant toddler services
- Geographic mismatch between where highest risk families are and where our programs are located
  - Have not adequately addressed suburbanization of poverty
  - Some communities with great need do not have appropriate physical space for programs
  - Some communities are saturated with programs and others don't have the capacity to support the high quality programs needed
- We continue to have fewer services than children who need them

“[There is] Too little attention to priority populations and too many barriers created by the silos in State government. DCFS, DHS and ISBE which control and administer the vast majority of ECE resources do not have a commonly articulated vision of what each is trying to achieve for young children and families. There should be a common policy, vision and program metrics that all ECE programs share with regard to increasing access to services by the most at risk populations.”

### Potential Solutions

- Common policy, vision, and program metrics that all ECE programs share with regard to increasing access to services by the most at-risk populations
- Do a deeper dive into how we are serving high-risk sub populations in terms of numbers and how we are serving them
- Specify in detail target goals by race/ethnicity, poverty, geography
- Improve blending and braiding policies
- More effective parent education and recruitment
- Better share data and information across all funding streams (including Head Start)
- Create accountability at the service delivery level requiring that providers reach and serve the poorest kids and families
- Abandon the one size fits all funding and program model structures

### Effectiveness at the Systems Level – Issues

Lack of data is a major issue for understanding systems effectiveness. We do not currently have the cross-systems data infrastructure (and in many cases the single agency data systems) to understand how the system is functioning and make informed decisions to improve effectiveness. Some specific issues raised include:

- Need for data to understand our current level of compliance with bilingual statute
- Need data to understand which funding streams are funding what, where, how and when, especially with providers using multiple funding streams
- Need to acknowledge and address that effectiveness looks different for different sub populations. Program models and metrics need to account for that.
- Need effective coordination between programs to target and layer resources

- Need clarity in how decisions are made, how policy direction is decided, who administers programs, and systems for communications between agencies, stakeholders and the field
- Need cooperative dialogue across agencies and true collaboration

“We have no data on outcomes for children that are enrolled in multiple programs/funding streams. Is there difference in outcomes when children are in full day program with blended funding of HS and/or PFA in contrast to part day PFA, with children transported to FCC or center?”

- Staff compensation has not improved
- Inconsistent training and support
- Not enough full day, full year programs
- Lack of attention to transitions – between programs where children are dually enrolled (e.g. child care and/or EI and/or home visiting) and also between ECE and K-12

#### Potential Solutions

- Improved coordination around PD and TA, embedded professional development
- Better data systems
- Better communication and agreements around funding streams accepting the same materials and documentation
- Statewide guidance on transitions, require programs to report data on transitions as a condition of contracts
- Better connect to, leverage, and use other systems and funding streams including K-12, public health, mental health

### Sustainability and Stability at the Systems Level – Issues

There is simply not enough funding in the system to achieve our goals this includes government funding at all levels (federal, state, local) and private sector funding. Funding is volatile and we continue to have to fight to hold on to what we have every year.

Specific issues include:

- The true cost of high-quality care that is responsive to the specific needs of our highest risk populations is not acknowledged and programs aren’t adequately funded.
- We are not compensating staff sufficiently to provide stability at the program level.
- Lack of adequate numbers of staff at state agencies
- We haven’t built some of the TA and governance infrastructure that would help provide stability

#### Potential Solutions

- Identify a dedicated source of revenue as in other states (AZ)
- Re-engineer funding streams

“The State should be able to articulate: who, where and how families are presenting for services, who is not being served effectively, why and where, what kind of services are currently available and needed from the perspective of providers and end users and how effective is local collaboration in addressing the needs of their community or sub-region of the State.”

Because many responses were repeated across the three areas (ex. silos in funding streams and need for bilingual staff were both cited multiple times), we have combined the responses and instead organized them by broad categorical area (funding, capacity, silos, and needs and services mismatch) in the following table.

Q 3-5 Summary of What Improvements are Needed Across System Goals

Equitable Access, Effectiveness, & Sustainability Gaps		
Funding	inadequate funding (general)	7
	federal funding streams/ sunset, reductions	3
	state level funding streams threatened	6
	funding for capital and safety improvements nonexistent	1
	cost per child (decreases in PFA)	1
Capacity	capacity and infrastructure for data at state and local levels	10
	state agency staff (substantial decreases in numbers)	1
	workforce compensation (+inequities of salary and benefits between school and community based providers)	4
Silos	agencies work in silos	5
	communication and agreements between funding streams incl. eligibility	6
	systems alignment	9
	governance structure needs to improve coordination and accountability	2
	barriers between B-5 and K-12 and among the range of ECE programs	2
	cooperative dialogue and collaboration	4
Needs and Services Mismatch	compliance with ISBE r.e. bilingual statute; QRS incorporate linguistic and cultural diversity all the way up and down rating system	2
	more teachers of color and linguistic and cultural diversity among teachers	4
	inequitable access across geography	6
	improve access/ improve services for more at risk populations	7
	uneven access to/ improvements needed in PD and TA	4
	irregular hours for working families/PFA half day not meeting working family needs	5
	inequitable access for infants and toddlers	1
	need more/better mental health supports	1

**Structural Assets and Barriers**

Responses regarding the structural assets and barriers to achieving system wide goals praised newfound/developing infrastructure and coordination, especially through the Early Learning Council and Governor’s Office on Early Childhood Development, as well as the collective will and talent to forward system wide work. However, participants still feel a lack of central driver for the system at whole, resulting in ongoing fragmentation and inability to successfully meet the needs of children and families. In particular, a large number of participants cited data challenges, including inconsistent ways of measuring and

capturing progress, major data gaps, a general lack of metrics and monitoring, all of which leads to an inability to gather a comprehensive view of access.

	<b>Assets</b>		<b>Barriers</b>	
Funding and Approach	Commitment to and funding for services prenatally to five incl. home visiting	10	General lack of funding	2
	Collaboration among health and education systems	2	Lack of local investment in most at risk children and families	1
	Ability to successfully win federal funds	4	State's current fiscal crisis incl. child care changes	2
	Strong private sector engagement	3	Failure to invest in infrastructure i.e. facilities and transportation	4
			Turf issues	1
Capacity	Infrastructure supports quality & coordination	5	Lack of staff capacity at state agencies	3
	Collaborative Networks, Early Learning Council, GOECD	5	Lack of meaningful feedback loops	2
	Improving data	1	Lack of systemic coordination in ECE system; no central driver; fragmentation	7
	Strong capacity for systems building	4	Data gaps, inconsistencies, comprehensive view of access, & lack of metrics/monitoring	8
	Established a set of system goals	1	Bureaucratic structures	2
Alignment	Collective will and talent benefits collaboration	6	Need to align allocation of existing assets incl. eligibility requirement	4
	Bi-partisan political support in GA and Gov Office	1	Regional disparities and inconsistencies	1
Matching Needs and Services	Commitment to serving bilingual children	2	Needed quality improvements (ex. diversity)	1
	Some promising local models developed to serve highest needs (Innovation Zones, grassroots models, etc.)	2	Need to tier priority populations & agree to services that will help overcome barriers to K readiness	1
	Emerging mental health capacity	1	Inconsistent credentialing of staff neg. impacts bilingual population	1
	Blending and braiding encouraged	1	Opposing and/or distinct eligibility req.	2
	Able to reach many children w/array of services	2		
	Growing PD supports	1	Need to increase pay for teachers and aides	1

## Working in Current System

At the last ELC meeting, the group brainstormed a list of components they feel are *working well* within the current system:

Answer Choices	Responses
• We reach a large number of children across all geographic regions of Illinois through early care and education programs	33.33% 6
• System includes a focus on services for families prenatally through school entry age	50.00% 9
• Services are offered in a range of settings and modalities – center-based, home-based, home visiting, through community-based programs and school-based programs	77.78% 14
• We have some ability to understand reach of programs and demographic risk factors of families through IECAM	5.56% 1
• We have strong Preschool for All rules and guidelines	11.11% 2
• We have comprehensive 0-5 early learning and development standards	5.56% 1
• Home visiting programs use evidence-based program models	11.11% 2
• We have developed new service models to meet the needs of high risk children	16.67% 3
• We have a substantial system of quality infrastructure supports (professional development, mental health consultation, etc.)	44.44% 8
• As a result of strong state systems we have been successful at winning additional federal funding in order to expand services	33.33% 6
• Decentralized funding mitigates our risk of state funding cuts by cloaking the total amount spent on early childhood; additionally, even if one area is reduced, another may increase and offset the loss	22.22% 4
• We have a powerful advocacy network across all parts of the system	50.00% 9
• We have linkages to a continuum of services outside of traditional ECE – K-12 education, SNAP, TANF, etc.	11.11% 2
• Our state uses a substantial percentage of TANF funds for early childhood services	0.00% 0
• We have support and participation of local philanthropic partners	33.33% 6
• We have strong systems and procedures for solid input into detailed policy decisions via many councils and advisory committees	11.11% 2
• Our process allows a lot of players to participate at the systems level	16.67% 3
• We are able to include a diversity of voices, even if not yet as diverse as we would like	27.78% 5
• Connections between state agencies around shared programming are strong and worth sustaining	33.33% 6
<b>Total Respondents: 18</b>	

Of these, participants felt the *most* critical elements to maintain in a future state were:

- Services offered in a range of settings and modalities (14 responses 78%)
- A powerful advocacy network across all parts of the system (9 responses 50%)
- System includes a focus on services for families prenatally through school entry age (9 responses 50%)
- A substantial system of quality infrastructure supports (8 responses 44%)

### Downsides to Current System

At the last ELC meeting, the group brainstormed a list of components they feel are *downsides* to the current system that must be addressed in a future state:

Answer Choices	Responses
• Small providers find it very complicated to navigate relationships with multiple agencies to blend and braid funding streams	50.00% 9
• Children and families find it very complicated and confusing as a result of fragmented services that are neither seamless nor comprehensive	83.33% 15
• Lack of consistent definitions of regional geographic service area boundaries	16.67% 3
• Lack of data makes it impossible to understand which children are getting which services and if they are the services that best meet families' needs	66.67% 12
• There is a lack of "whole system" accountability as a result of authority for decisions happening across multiple agencies and departments and rooted in accountability to a single funding stream	27.78% 5
• There is a lack of accountability due to different metrics for allocation of different funding streams—how do we know funds have been used effectively across the board? Ultimate program goals and outcomes differ by different funding streams	55.56% 10
• There are bureaucratic silos regarding how contracts are managed, the data and outcomes required by each, and what each is trying to accomplish	61.11% 11
• There are inefficiencies when decisions are made through different entities but are not aligned (e.g., access to particular trainings or support services for service providers)	27.78% 5
• Communication is poor	16.67% 3
• Provider sustainability is threatened by the fact that providers are required to navigate multiple contracts among multiple agencies	11.11% 2
• We aren't able to tell a coherent story that might help us retain or protect our funding streams	16.67% 3
<b>Total Respondents: 18</b>	

When asked to prioritize those downsides, participants far and away felt it most important that our future state address the fact that 'children and families find it very complicated

and confusing as a result of fragmented services that are neither seamless nor comprehensive.’

Additional priority downsides participants feel must be addressed include the lack of data, bureaucratic silos regarding how contracts are managed, the data and outcomes required by each, and what each is trying to accomplish, as well as a lack of accountability due to the differing program goals and outcomes across different funding streams:

**Working/Not Working Revisions and Caveats**

When asked to revise or react to the items themselves, the following additions and/or caveats to the current lists were suggested.

“Our funding streams are still individually inadequate to support sustained quality on their own. Our braiding of funds is still not sufficient to support sustainability and necessary growth in services. Some of our infrastructure and our direct services are reliant on funding streams that will end or that we need to advocate for annually, including many of the federal funded initiatives.”

<b>What is Working</b>
I don't see the strengths in terms of connection across state agencies with the exception of a few examples.
We have some beginnings of service models that may support the needs of high risk children but not quite there yet. We need to further explore what program support is necessary to support these children and how to expand funding to support that effort. We have a powerful advocacy network but need to draw in more voices to inform our work. Our systems and procedures for solid input into detailed policy decisions has shifted over the last few years in large part due to the incredible federal funding opportunities and the role of the Council and other advisory bodies needs to be solidified.
Our strong systems for solid input into detailed policy decisions can be too detailed and not high-level enough at times. This has also changed over the years and has not been as strong recently - with tight federal timelines and such. The connections between state agencies and coordination with OECD has the potential to be strong and worth improving. There are strong existing connections but more work is needed to provide clarity of roles and shared expectations for partnership.
Our process allows a lot of players to participate at the systems level - the intent is good here and meetings are open to the public. However, it is rare to have representation from individuals who are recipients of programs, who are providers and other grassroots stakeholders.
Still don't think that we are reaching linguistically and culturally diverse populations as we should...

For 'downsides' the current system that must be addressed in a future state, participants cited the following additions and/or caveats:

<b>Downsides</b>
Although challenging I don't feel that multiple contracts are a significant issue of threat to sustainability. I also don't agree that the lack of single accountability authority is a major problem or that it can be improved by giving more power to one office or agency. Illinois governance culture is very challenging but also requires compromise and negotiation. I don't see a structural fix to the challenge that will take away this reality.
These downsides suggest that providers would benefit from having one contract but I believe there is protection in diversified funding streams.
I believe there is an enormous amount of data being collected at local levels and through programs' work toward levels in QRIS (especially as they move into the Awards of Excellence). But the current systems do not have capacity to share and assign value to provide the powerful statewide stories needed.

## Single Most Important Outcome

When asked to contribute a single sentence describing the most important outcome that should be addressed in any structural change we pursue, responses ranged across funding and capacity concerns at the system level to varying priorities regarding recipients of services.

We broke sentences into their fragments to account for the multiple concepts often present in a single sentence; therefore each unique count below is not representative of a whole 'vote,' but rather represents a mention.

“[We need a] Governance structure that improves coordination and accountability between agencies serving young children and families; reduces duplication; simplifies blending and braiding of funds at the provider level; increases community level coordination; develops a feedback loop for program implementers”

Most Important Outcome		
<b>Funding</b>	Protect and expand funds for early care and education in all settings	2
<b>Capacity</b>	Clear roles and lines of authority/ whole system	3
	A broad, shared vision for early learning	
	Streamline contracting to decrease provider burden	
	Program quality improvement	
	Data driven approach	
	Coordination across individual public and private entities	
	Mixed delivery system	3
	Improve coordination and communication across agencies	
<b>Direct Service</b>	Child and family at forefront in decision making	
	<i>Most at risk</i> children receive care and education	4
	All children and families can engage	
	Meet <i>comprehensive</i> needs of families-transcend discreet programs	2
	Fair access for providers and families across diversity and geography of IL	
	Do no harm	

I don't think there is a particular governance model that is necessary to achieve implementation of our early childhood system priorities, but we need to agree on one and have the leadership to move it forward.