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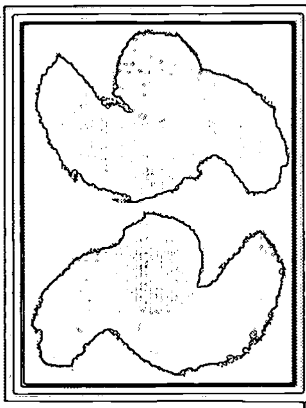
ABSTRACT

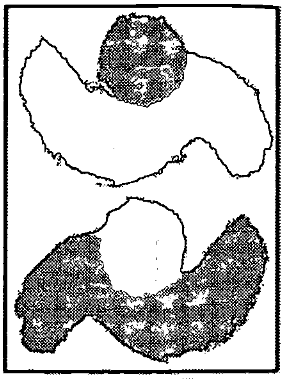
These case studies were developed as part of the Child Care Partnership Project, a multi-year technical assistance effort. The Partnership Project provides a series of technical assistance resources and materials to support the development and strengthening of public-private partnerships to improve the quality and supply of child care. The five case studies are: (1) Developing a Facilities Loan Fund in San Francisco; (2) Creating an Early Education System in Colorado; (3) Georgia's Voluntary Prekindergarten Program; (4) Financing Quality Child Care in Indiana; and (5) Smart Start: A Good Beginning for All of North Carolina's Children. Each case study describes the partnership and discusses its activities, resources, results, next steps, success stories, success factors, advice for other partnerships, and contact information. (EV)



The Child Care Partnership Project

Case Studies of Public-Private Partnerships for Child Care

U.S. Department
of Health and
Human Services
Administration for
Children and Families
Child Care Bureau



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DEVELOPING A FACILITIES LOAN FUND IN SAN FRANCISCO

"San Francisco is facing a child care crisis. We already have 4,000 children on waiting lists for subsidized child care, and welfare reform will require additional child care for an estimated 5,000 children," says Amy Kershaw, fiscal policy analyst in the San Francisco Mayor's Office of Children, Youth and Their Families (MOCYF). "Welfare reform will fail if we don't provide a high-quality, safe, nurturing environment for kids while their parents go off to work."

As in other cities across the country, welfare reform is creating an unprecedented demand for child care in San Francisco. Early in 1997, San Francisco city officials projected that 2,700 additional licensed child care spaces would be needed by the end of 1998. To address this crisis, the City of San Francisco in 1997 established the Child Care Facilities Fund, a public-private partnership involving the city, local banks, foundations, and nonprofit organizations. This case study will describe the Child Care Facilities Fund, a new venture that has brought tremendous energy and commitment to ensuring that every child in San Francisco has a space in a high-quality child care program.

THE SAN FRANCISCO CHILD CARE FACILITIES FUND

The Board of Supervisors has allocated $200,000 in the 1997-98 budget to launch the CCFF and increased the commitment to $600,000 in the 1998-99 budget.

The Child Care Facilities Fund (CCFF) began in 1998 in response to recommendations from San Francisco's Welfare Reform Task Force that were adopted by the Board of Supervisors to improve child care in the city. According to Susan Leal, City Treasurer and former Board member, "We saw welfare reform coming down the pike and knew we had to start setting up some infrastructure."

The Board of Supervisors has allocated $200,000 in the 1997-98 budget to launch the CCFF and increased the commitment to $600,000 in the 1998-99 budget. The City seeded the effort and is being flexible to ensure that the CCFF meets the needs of both family child care providers and nonprofit centers. The City also sought leverage for its funds.

The CCFF is administered by the Low Income Housing Fund. This institution has a proven track record and provides stability for the Fund to weather changes in the political climate.

A 25-member Program Advisory Committee guides the fund. This Committee is comprised of staff from the mayor's office, child care providers in both home

A local non-profit community development financial institution administers the fund.

A look at any meeting agenda reflects the group's tremendous focus on getting the job done.

and center settings, parents, child care advocates, resource and referral agencies, businesses, philanthropies, and other community members. Partners include: The Office of the Mayor for the City and County of San Francisco, the Miriam and Peter Haas Foundation (a local foundation), Providian Financial Corporation (a leading, publicly traded consumer lender), Starting Points (an initiative of the Carnegie Corporation of New York focusing on improving the lives of young children and their families), and individual donors.

The Low Income Housing Fund (LIHF), a local non-profit community development financial institution, administers the CCFF. This 14-year-old, seasoned community development agency was chosen as the administrative home of the CCFF for several reasons. First, it has many years of prior experience with innovative financing programs and a proven track record. Second, the agency's longevity and reputation will allow it to build a fund in perpetuity, which will be a community asset outside city government and safe from political tides.

Yet CCFF is more than its partners and structure. It is also the enthusiasm and commitment of those involved. Attend a meeting and you will find participants of different professional and cultural backgrounds working together respectfully to ensure that one day every child in San Francisco will have a space in a good-quality child care program. A look at any meeting agenda reflects the group's tremendous focus on getting the job done.
Each discussion item is assigned a specific number of minutes. As a result, people come to meetings prepared. If discussion begins to ramble, someone accepts responsibility for developing options and the group returns to the specific item at a later date. For example, upon hearing that several providers were having a hard time finding someone to do small contracting jobs, a committee member suggested that the CCFF hire a contractor who could take care of everyone's small jobs. What could have become an obstacle was solved on the spot, demonstrating the initiative's flexibility and responsiveness.

The CCFF is initially offering three types of support to child care providers:

- *Small grants to family child care providers.* Through the Family Child Care Assistance Program (FCCAP), CCFF awards grants of $1,000 to $5,000 to meet one-time capital expenses such as minor renovations to meet licensing requirements, purchase of equipment to expand infant care, and improvements that make homes accessible to children with disabilities. In the first round of funding, in May 1998, a total of $100,000 was awarded to 23 providers to help create 66 new spaces for children and help providers offer higher quality care. A second round of funding, under revised guidelines, is scheduled for Spring 1999.

In addition to loan funds, the CCFF provides technical assistance in the areas of facilities renovation, expansion, and business management skills. This technical assistance has been tailored to meet the needs of family child care providers and child care center staff. Topics include creating budget projections, developing business plans, improving space, and, most importantly, helping the child care community succeed in the unfamiliar arena of loan financing, which many programs need to grow and thrive.

- *Financial assistance to improve facilities at nonprofit child care centers.* The Child Care Center Assistance Program (CCCAP) provides low-cost financing to improve the quality, safety, and overall environment of centers. Financial tools available at this time are: a limited number of capital grants; zero interest mini-loans for project planning; short-term direct loans; and conventional loans with favorable terms through CCFF guarantees or interest-rate writedowns. Applications for loans will be accepted on a rolling basis. The CCCAP has made seven grants of $10,000 each to create 329 new slots in nonprofit centers.

- *Technical assistance in the areas of facilities renovation, expansion, and business management skills.* This technical assistance has been tailored to meet the needs of family child care providers and child care center staff. Quarterly workshops for providers will address operating and marketing a family child care home. Center staff will also participate in quarterly workshops with experienced consultants to develop relevant skills. Topics include creating budget projections, developing

The City and CCFF are partnering to access $10 million in federal, HUD Section 108 funding.

business plans, improving space, and, most importantly, helping the child care community succeed in the unfamiliar arena of loan financing, which many programs need to grow and thrive.

The Fund is also using some of its technical assistance budget to develop two courses at the City College: *Advanced Business Practices for Family Child Care Providers* and *Environments* to address facilities issues. In addition, the Fund is developing a mentoring program to support providers as they make quality improvements.

Finally, the Fund is working to leverage other sources of funding. For instance, the City and CCFF are partnering to access $10 million in federal, HUD Section 108 funding. By using city funds to secure the loans, providers with little collateral can access new funding to improve facilities.

RESOURCES

CCFF funding comes from a variety of public and private sources. A city developer fee that has existed since 1985 earmarks public funding for CCFF. This law requires that any new office or hotel building include space for a child care center, or developers must pay a fee to the Child Care Capital Fund, of which a portion goes to the CCFF. The CCFF also receives an annual contribution of $600,000 in city general funds this year. Other funders include:

First year fundraising efforts yielded $2.5 million.

- The Miriam and Peter Haas Fund ($250,000);
- Providian Financial Corporation ($400,000 over three years);
- Wells Fargo Foundation ($25,000);
- M M. Bank Sumitomo ($15,000); and
- Individual donations.

Fundraising efforts have yielded $2.5 million, and the goal is to raise $10 million over the next several years.

RESULTS

The initiative is new, and a current priority is clarifying goals, objectives, and outcomes. A two-year strategic plan, based on extensive input from stakeholders, was scheduled to be completed by the end of 1998 and will serve as a roadmap through 2000. The CCFF is accountable to the PAC, and an annual report is provided to the city's mayor.

NEXT STEPS

The first months of the CCFF program have been productive, and beginning goals have been achieved. Important programs have been designed and have been made available to the community. Fundraising efforts are under way, and the CCFF has already leveraged $1 million in private funding. Legislative changes in the city's Affordable Childcare Fund—a development fee paid by the developers of new office or hotel buildings that do not contain space for child care—will allow most of the funds (about $500,000 per year) to be channeled to the CCFF for child care facility improvement efforts. CCFF education and fundraising efforts also have reached into the corporate and financing communities. To support this effort, Providian Financial held a breakfast with local corporate leaders to create new interest in the Fund.

Despite its early success, the CCFF faces many systemic challenges. Development costs are high, San Francisco's real estate market is tight, and operating subsidies do not meet the costs of supporting quality facilities.

It is not enough to provide financing to providers and programs.

CCFF also realizes that it is not enough to provide financing to providers and programs. In response, it is developing a comprehensive strategic plan with funding from the Miriam and Peter Haas Foundation to help CCFF programs become even more effective in meeting San Francisco's child care needs.

In the meantime, September Jarrett, a LIHF loan officer, has offered the following guidance to CCFF as it assesses the initiative based on its findings in the first months:

- Keep expectations modest;
- Seek to have child care housed in a variety of community facilities, such as affordable housing developments;
- Provide technical assistance in business operations and addressing facilities' needs; and
- Be active in policy issues effecting facility improvement at the state and national levels.

SUCCESS STORIES

The following examples illustrate the variety of ways in which funding from CCFF is making a difference in San Francisco.

Increasing the number of spaces available in family child care.

With a $5,000 FCCAP grant plus a family child care loan, Sandy Cheng will expand her licensed capacity from 8 to 14 children by moving her program from the second floor of her home to a newly-renovated space that used to be the garage. Sandy learned about the FCCAP through Wu Yee Children's Services, a local resource and referral agency and CCFF partner.

Improving quality through improving outdoor play space.

Karen Lewis, owner of Cupid's Day Care, used her $5,000 FCCAP grant to replace bark ground covering with rubber matting and concrete to provide a safer and healthier environment for the children in her care. Karen, who is licensed to serve 14 children in a high-need area of San Francisco, told a CCFF staff member, "I've been in business for ten years, and this is the first help I have ever received from anybody."

Serving more children by creating a new program.

Years of work in her community and a waiting list of nearly 500 children prompted Brenda Lopez, director of the Visitacion Valley Community Center's preschool, to expand her program. The school serves nearly 150 children from low-income families, one-quarter of whom are in foster care or involved with Child Protective Services. The school submitted a proposal to develop one of three new child care sites as part of a Visitacion Valley redevelopment initiative. The CCCAP will provide a $10,000 grant to support the agency's planning and predevelopment costs for this new program.

SUCCESS FACTORS

While many Partnership leaders attribute their success to serendepity or good timing, in reality it is an opportunistic attitude and good planning that yield success. In San Francisco the following factors contributed to the strong success of the facilities fund.

A comprehensive approach.

In promoting community development, the LIHF has expanded its sound financial skills beyond housing, lending its financial know-how to the child care crisis in San Francisco.

New faces and new energy.

People involved with the CCFF believe that they can make a difference, and they are doing so. They use their financial skills to tackle problems and, as a result, are energizing veterans in the child care field.

Building on existing resources.

The stage for CCFF was set three years earlier, when the city received a Starting Points grant from the Carnegie Corporation of New York. This grant was the impetus for the creation of an Early Childhood Interagency Council (ECIC), which identified improving access to quality child care as a critical need for families in San Francisco to the city's Mayor and Board of Supervisors. The Council is also working on strategies to improve school readiness through health care and family support programs.

Building on lessons learned by others.

LIHF conducted extensive research of several outstanding child care lending models, including the State of Maryland's public/private partnership, the lending programs of Self-Help of North Carolina, the Chicago Facilities Fund, and the Child Care Capital Fund of Massachusetts, a private program. The National Children's Facilities Network (NCFN), which serves as a vehicle for information sharing and advocacy among child care lenders, was an invaluable source of information. LIHF recently joined NCFN.

Basing strategies on a realistic understanding of the child care field.

By thoroughly researching the child care system, LIHF is now aware of potential obstacles to the fund's success and can work to address them effectively.

Reaching and communicating with diverse populations of child care providers.

CCFF has already begun to reach out to diverse populations, and in the future will try to extend itself more directly to the Russian, Vietnamese, and Laotian communities, and provide support to San Francisco's diverse populations.

Being flexible and thinking creatively.

By working so hard to reach people in culturally sensitive ways, the initiative has created an environment in which people are less invested in "how it's always been done" and more invested in getting problems solved.

Including child care providers, parents, and other stakeholders in policy and program development from day one.

Child care facilities that have a strong base of support from the beginning are most likely to succeed.

ADVICE FOR OTHER PARTNERSHIPS

While every partnership is unique in its members and mission, the San Francisco facilities fund offers many valuable lessons for others interested in joining and supporting partnerships.

Get the word out about what you are doing.

As Jon Klein of LIHF explains, "It only takes a little bit of talk to get people thinking. And it only takes a few people thinking to begin to make things happen."

Create a solid business case for potential partners.

Help them see that investing in child care leads to economic development, which leads to a healthy business climate.

Encourage partners to be clear about how they benefit from being involved from the beginning.

When partners see the pluses for themselves, they are more likely to remain committed to an initiative for the long-term, and everyone benefits. In the case of CCFF, the city is involved to such a great degree because the city needs more child care slots. The Miriam and Peter Haas Fund has long supported programs to increase quality care for two- to five-year olds. To be successful in reaching this goal, the foundation recognizes the need for facilities to house those services. Providian Financial Corporation, a third partner, wants to be better known in San Francisco, which is headquarters for their company. To help accomplish this goal, they are using their Community Reinvestment Act (CRA) contributions to support the Fund.

House your initiative outside government.	As a result, it will not be subject to changes in political winds.
Build on the strengths and resources of your key partners.	Take steps to be sure that they are invested in helping you reach your goals. The Miriam and Peter Haas Fund has been key to opening foundation doors. Providian Financial Corporation has made corporate introductions.
Create a strategic plan to let contributors know where you are headed.	This will give them a sense that things are under control and make them more likely to remain involved. A strategic plan can also keep everyone informed of challenges to be faced and strategies to address them. This will help to avoid unexpected disappointments and engage everyone in finding the most effective ways to proceed.
Build on success.	The CCFF takes before-and-after photos of spaces that have been renovated. These are shared with partners and potential partners to demonstrate the value and effectiveness of the initiative and to foster new successes.
Be flexible, learn as you go, and be willing to make changes.	It is important to be willing to adapt so you can best meet the dynamic needs of the families and communities you want to serve.
Consider economic development organizations such as LIHF as partners.	They will bring a broader perspective and new resources to your initiative. For example, LIHF brings connections with the housing and economic development communities that child care public-private partnerships do not typically have. Also, being housed outside government gives the partnership enhanced flexibility.

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CREATING AN EARLY EDUCATION SYSTEM IN COLORADO

According to Doug Price, one of Educare's founders, "From the start, we recognized that before you can reach common ground, you have to reach higher ground." To understand quality, each member of this partnership began envisioning what a child's day in child care should look like.

Educare Colorado started in 1998 as a coalition of business, philanthropic, early education, industry, and government leaders to take on the task of creating a statewide early education system. Although Educare is a new venture, it is rooted in a long history of early education improvement efforts in Colorado, including the Business Commission on Child Care Financing and other local collaborative efforts. As Mandy O'Neill, Educare's CEO, explains, "There are already many good programs out there that we need to support and build on. We know what's good for kids. What we need to do is to bring good programs to scale so that all children have access to them. That's what Educare is all about."

In 1995, the Business Commission on Child Care Financing, created by Governor Roy Romer, brought together business leaders to take a look at early education in Colorado as a business that needed improving and to help government develop solutions. Sam Williams, minority leader of the Colorado House, originally staffed the Commission. Representatives from early childhood organizations were invited to participate and share information. However, from the outset, issues were to be "solved" by business. The Commission had many successes, including orchestrating a bipartisan strategy to create a voluntary tax checkoff that allows taxpayers to donate a portion of their tax refunds to a child care quality-improvement fund. Yet, according to Douglas Price, President of FirstBank of Denver and Chairman of the Commission, "It quickly became clear that addressing early education issues within the state went far beyond looking at financing. A system needed to be created." In addition, business leaders understood that, given the new research on brain development, providing high quality care is essential to children's futures – and to the future of the state.

The need for such a system with its careful attention to quality is clear. Out of the state's 330,000 preschool children, there are currently 100,000 children in care outside their homes. It is projected that with full implementation of welfare reform, 130,000 children will be in care. And while 90% of parents rate the quality of care their children receive as "very good," the 1995 Cost, Quality and Outcomes Study found that 87% of Colorado's child care is "mediocre to poor." In addition, child care providers in Colorado, as in many states, are paid hourly wages that range from $5.50 to $6.40, which are comparable to those of a fast-food employee. This results in high staff turnover that lowers the quality of care children receive.

Collaboration between the business and early childhood communities in Colorado to address these needs has helped Educare get off to a promising start. This case study tells its story to date.

EDUCARE COLORADO

In early 1997, business leaders, including former members of the Business Commission, hosted a dinner for Colorado foundation leaders at the governor's mansion. They initially hoped that foundations would fund and lead a statewide early education initiative, replicating a similar effort in Allegheny County, Pennsylvania. But the foundation leaders would not buy in. They agreed to provide support *only if* the business leaders stayed involved to help figure out what elements were needed and how to take programs to scale to create a statewide early education system.

The group had high-level backing from the governor and involvement from many different sectors. Stakeholders with diverse philosophies and perspectives agreed to come together, to focus on the children, and to look for common ground.

Discussions that would lead to the development of Educare Colorado began. During the next three months, business, foundation, and government leaders created an expansive leadership group, including representatives from the early education, health, and religious communities. This group was charged with creating a viable, community-based plan for an ongoing sustainable system that communities could then implement to provide Colorado's young children (under the age of six) with quality early education. Strategies to reach this goal would include: getting agreement on what quality early education is, being inclusive of all stakeholders, and involving the business community.

In early discussions, the group, which numbered 140, struggled to find a common set of guiding principles that everyone could agree on. At first, members tended to see Educare's goals through lenses of their own programs, disciplines and professions. But these group members were committed to collaborate and persevered, learning each other's "language" and coming to respect each perspective. As AnnaJo Haynes, Executive Director of Mile High Child Care Center Association, explains, "We were ready to take on this challenge. We had a collaborative culture. We were all ready to make room for new voices and diverse expertise."

A subgroup of 40 to 50 people then began to meet to address key questions about Educare's structure, financing, and principles, including child centeredness and family involvement. A Conex Anonymous voting system was used to electronically record responses. Terrific discussions ensued and, by the end of the day, the group had reached extraordinary agreement. Educare had a clear vision for Colorado's children: to create a fully funded, child-centered, parentally involved, permanently sustainable, high-quality, universal early education system that is appropriately monitored and evaluated.

At the same time, The Colorado Trust was looking at early education as a possible new initiative. The foundation's interest was fueled by the increased need for child care created by welfare reform and the new brain development research that shows the importance of quality care for children in the early years of life. It wanted to provide strategic support to leverage a larger effort. Educare Colorado provided a perfect opportunity.

ACTIVITIES

Through parent and public education, Educare will create market demand for quality early education.

"You don't pilot a system. You roll it out, beginning with a small number of sites that gets expanded as you test your methodology and build on lessons learned."
-Mandy O'Neill, Educare

Educare is a 501(c) nonprofit organization staffed by a Chief Executive Officer and seven staff members. Its governing structure consists of a board of trustees, a steering committee, and an advisory committee that continues to expand and operate in an advisory capacity and as a community outreach body. Educare does not provide services itself, rather it contracts out and offers support to agencies already doing the work that needs to be done. Thanks to a grant from the Colorado Trust, the initiative's operating costs for the first five years are covered, providing welcome breathing room.

Educare's rollout plan identifies its goals and objectives for its first four years. Major goals the initiative hopes to achieve include:

- gaining agreement on how to measure quality early education;
- improving early education quality;

- creating consumer demand for quality early education through public and parent education;
- developing fundraising policies and procedures, as well as short- and long-term fundraising plans targeting the foundation community, business, individuals, and in-kind support;
- identifying the nature of Educare's relationship with counties across the state;
- developing cohesive, timely, and opportune agendas for public policy at the county, state, and federal levels, working in partnership with existing public policy/advocacy agencies;
- creating a public awareness/community engagement process to support the initiative and to help close the $3,000 gap between the yearly cost of quality early education per child and existing resources; and
- finding an evaluator for the initiative.

Educare has developed a business plan to guide its work. This initiative has been deliberate in its planning, due to the strong influence of the business community.

An early goal is to begin implementing Educare on all four fronts: parent education, public education, quality improvement, and evaluation. This is being done through the creation of the Four Star Quality Rating System based on the Early Childhood Environmental Rating Scale (ECERS) and the Infant/Toddler Environment Scale (ITERS); a program's accreditation status; and teacher credentials. This rating system will require evaluation and promote quality improvement by linking cost to quality. Through parent and public education, Educare will create market demand for quality early education.

RESOURCES

The Colorado Trust provided a planning grant of $100,000 and a Program Officer's time. In addition to providing funding, the Trust has provided expertise in chairing committees to study early education demand and effective provider incentives. The Trust's policy of "inclusion" has led to the participation of 140 individuals, other foundations, and $500,000 in in-kind support, mostly as donated time.

Educare raised close to $10 million of its $40 million fundraising goal in less than one year.

In less than a year, Educare has raised close to $10 million of its $40 million fundraising goal , thanks in large part to generous grants from The Colorado Trust and the Temple Hoyne Buell Foundation. Other funding partners include The Hunt Alternatives Fund, The Carson Family Trust, Mile High United Way, LMC Community Foundation, and the Clayton Foundation. Business planning, legal, and media services have been provided pro bono and/or donated by Arthur Andersen, Davis, Graham & Stubbs, and The Integer Group. Additionally, one of the long-term goals of Educare is to secure sustainable public funding for child care services. Currently, several public-sector leaders serve on Educare's Steering and Advisory Committees, helping to guide the leveraging of public funds.

RESULTS

Educare Colorado is a true public-private partnership

Educare Colorado has successfully set an initiative in place that has received both public and private sector support at the state and local levels. Many people attribute the initiative's creation and success so far to its belief in inclusion—of public and private stakeholders within the state, as well as outside experts who offered information on the role of business in early childhood system development and strategies for using a model. The relationships built or strengthened through this process will be a legacy of this project, regardless of what else is accomplished.

The evaluation of Educare will be designed to assess the results of the initiative's process and outcomes.

NEXT STEPS

Educare Colorado will begin its system development in Clear Creek, Denver, Gilpin, and Jefferson Counties. In these pilot counties, up to 94,000 children under the age of six are in early education programs. This pilot program will set the stage to eventually impact up to 300,000 children statewide. According to Mandy O'Neill, "Our statewide rollout may proceed faster than we anticipated. Other communities that we want to build bridges with are expressing great interest in being involved. We are on our way."

SUCCESS FACTORS

A history of collaboration.

This process was built on the foundation of many years of collaboration within the state. Without a history of working together for common solutions, the initiative may not have worked as well or as quickly.

A commitment to do right by Colorado's children.

Group members were aware that, instead of fighting over scarce resources, they could work together to increase the total funding to improve the quality of early education. As a result, they were willing to stick with the process through the ups and downs.

The inclusion of a wide range of stakeholders.

The group had high-level backing from the governor and involvement from many different sectors. Stakeholders who had different philosophies in other areas agreed to come together, to focus on the children, and to look for common ground. But even with its early success, Educare has not lost sight of the importance of inclusion. As Doug Price explains, "Inclusion needs to be an ongoing effort."

Flexibility to ensure provider involvement.

Educare decided to hold focus groups with people providing early education for input about ways to get and keep them involved. Though the initiative was willing to pay people for their time and to pay for substitutes, providers did not show up at meetings. The reason: substitutes are impossible to find. In response, Educare is planning to meet with providers one-on-one at their programs.

Understanding quality early education through a child's eyes.

According to Doug Price, "From the start, we recognized that before you can reach common ground, you have to reach higher ground." To find this higher ground, each group member envisioned what a child's day in child care should look like. Taking this microcosm approach highlighted agreement about quality predictors and the fact that providing a quality experience for that child would cost a lot of money. From there, the group then took this child's experience to scale to help envision the system.

Using a market approach.

The group asked the question: What will this system look like economically? They knew from the start that to win support across the state, they had to focus on parental choice; the state government could not be in the business of choosing child care for families.

The philanthropic community.

One key to Educare's early success has been support from foundations. The Colorado Trust and other foundations have worked hand in hand with business and government leaders and other stakeholders, convening and participating in meetings as well as providing funding. They looked forward to their participation seeding other sources of funding, such as business or government.

A system that creates change from within.

Currently, there are no standards for quality. The rating system that Educare is creating gives families flexibility and choice. Parents will be able to learn about quality and then use that knowledge to choose quality care. In turn, this will increase the demand for quality care and, ultimately, increase the overall quality of early education.

ADVICE FOR OTHER PARTNERSHIPS

Find a window of opportunity.

A booming Colorado economy, decentralization of state funding down to the county level, and an understanding of child care issues provided a window of opportunity for Educare. This initiative can now build on years of successful, if piecemeal, programs and services at the county level that have been developed as counties explore the best use of their new funds and responsibilities.

Find key leaders—or champions.

Governor Romer and business leaders who are willing to learn about the issue, engage their colleagues, and remain engaged for the long haul have been critical to getting Educare started. The same is true of child advocates who opened up the door to allow new experts into the process.

Manage your initiative well.

Educare leaders are taking steps to ensure that the needs of all stakeholders are met. For example, they are maintaining ongoing communication, adapting time frames that are realistic, and finding translators when necessary to be sure that everyone can fully participate in meetings.

Understand the implications of the steps you take.

A successful initiative requires being able to see the links. For example, in Colorado, the goal is to improve quality through consumer education and market demand and at the same time to help providers work towards a living wage. This means that Educare must take into account all kinds of early education in this system, including private providers and the role of the education system.

Create a business plan.

This will give you a clear picture of where you are and where you are heading. Though your plan may be revised over time, everyone will have a common picture and thus be able to put their energy towards reaching your goals. Educare has been deliberate in its planning, due to the strong influence of the business community. As Doug Price explains, "We've had a plan and followed it deliberately and at times impatiently. That's what business leaders bring: the impatience to get things done."

Think about replication from the start.

Educare plans to develop a process engineering program with the University of Denver to ensure that this initiative can be replicated. By mapping out the process, and highlighting the importance of building community-level support, replication in other places is more likely.

Avoid reinventing the wheel.

Build on existing initiatives. Educare created a map of all the elements and services in each existing statewide program, including Ready to Succeed and First Impressions, to show how it will build upon—rather than duplicate —those services. Educare sees part of its system-building work as trying to support existing programs that are effective and working with others to help make them more so.

Take steps to ensure accountability.

Educare hopes to develop "mutually beneficial" relationships with other initiatives. However, because it recognizes the limitations of collaborations, Educare hopes to enter into contractual relations in which organizations are held accountable and have defined roles and responsibilities.

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This information was developed as part of the Child Care Partnership Project, a multi-year technical assistance effort funded by the Child Care Bureau, U.S. Department of Health and Human Services. The Partnership Project is providing a series of technical assistance resources and materials to support the development and strengthening of public-private partnerships to improve the quality and supply of child care. All of the materials produced under the Child Care Partnership Project will be available through the National Child Care Information Center at http://nccic.org/ccpartnerships or by phone at 1-(800) 616-2242. For more information on the project, please contact The Finance Project at (202) 628-4200.

GEORGIA'S VOLUNTARY PREKINDERGARTEN PROGRAM

"Preschool education is one of the most important issues facing this nation, and it is time America determines to make the most out of this critical time in a child's life. If our children are going to compete in a global market, we must make them global thinkers. It is incumbent upon us to do everything we can—as soon as we can—to prepare them to learn and to function in a world no longer limited by state or national boundaries."

"As an educator, I can tell you that the research proves what good teachers have known for a long time – that what happens to children in the first few years of life makes a big difference. At the age of four, our children still have twice as many brain cells as adult brains, and their brains are twice as active. But as the saying goes, 'Use it or lose it.' Whether the nerve connections in their brains are put to work in the service of lifelong intelligence, or whether they are discarded as a result of disuse, depends on the experiences available to the child." *Georgia Governor Zell Miller*

Georgia entered the 1990s with an unacceptable school dropout rate and an increasing teen pregnancy problem. In 1992, Governor Zell Miller decided to take a preventive approach to these problems after he reviewed research indicating that students with strong preschool experiences tend to be more successful in school, have higher self-esteem, and are less likely to drop out of school. He personally became the driving force behind the Georgia Voluntary Prekindergarten (Pre-K) Program, which began as an initiative to provide Pre-K opportunities to at-risk four-year-olds and now is open to all four-year-olds. Its mission is to prepare children for school and to develop school readiness skills in an environment that encourages children to enjoy learning.

In his January 1998 State of the State speech, Governor Miller explained he grew up in a South that was "ill housed, ill clad, and ill nourished." He continued by saying, "But it is not the South my grandchildren and great grandchildren will grow up in." This case study tells the story of Georgia's Pre-K Program, which is improving opportunities and preschool education for not only the children in Governor Miller's family but for children throughout the state.

GEORGIA'S PREKINDERGARTEN PROGRAM

During the 1992-93 school year, the Georgia Department of Education started a pilot program to serve 750 at-risk four-year-olds at 20 sites. In 1993 the program added 167 new sites and served 9,000 children. During 1995 and 1996, Governor Miller

Growth of the Pre-K Program

Year	*Children*	*Funds (millions)*
1993	*750*	*$3 (state)*
1994	*9,000*	*$37.1 (lottery)*
1995	*15,500*	*$78 (lottery)*
1996	*44,000*	*$182 (lottery)*
1997	*57,000*	*$210 (lottery)*
1998	*60,000*	*$217 (lottery)*

expanded eligibility to all four-year-old children regardless of income, tripling the number of children served in a single year from 15,500 to 44,000. To accommodate the rapid growth, Governor Miller created the Office of School Readiness (OSR), an independent office that reports directly to him. OSR currently funds 1600 provider sites in the state, enabling 3,174 classrooms to provide Pre-K to more than 60,000 children. In 1998, approximately 70 percent of all four-year-old children in the state participated in a prekindergarten program—60,000 through the Pre-K Program and 13,000 through Head Start. Over half of these children come from low-income families.

OSR-Approved Curricula:

- *Bank Street*
- *Creative Curriculum*
- *High Reach Framework*
- *High/Scope*
- *Montessori*
- *Scholastic*

Participation in the Pre-K is strictly voluntary and universally available to every four-year-old in the state. Programs usually operate on the school system calendar for the length of a typical school day, or six-and-a-half hours for 180 days each year. To maintain high quality, OSR must approve the curriculum used in each Pre-K classroom. Programs may use one of several preapproved curricula or seek OSR approval for a locally developed curriculum.

The Pre-K Program exists in a wide variety of settings:

- *private preschools;*
- *public/private elementary schools;*
- *public/private secondary schools;*
- *postsecondary vocational technical institutes;*
- *private and state colleges;*
- *private nonprofit and private for-profit child care learning centers;*
- *Georgia Department of Family and Children's Services offices;*
- *Head Start sites;*
- *hospitals;*
- *military bases; and*
- *YMCA/YWCAs.*

Georgia's four-year-olds attend Pre-K classes in a variety of public and private settings. Providers apply for contracts from OSR to teach Pre-K classes, and OSR distributes contracts to meet local demand and maintain parental choice. For example, the balance between public and private settings is carefully maintained. Providers are required to apply annually for program grants through OSR.

The success of the Pre-K Program continues to draw national attention. Already considered a success in Georgia, it was recognized as the most comprehensive and unique preschool initiative in the nation, receiving the prestigious Innovations in American Government Award in November 1997. In a 1998 conference on early education in Georgia, U.S. Department of Education Secretary Richard Riley said, "I'm so proud of the vision and hard work of Governor Zell Miller and his staff here in Georgia. What a tremendous legacy he will leave his state – the first state in the nation to make pre-school universally available for every four-year-old. Zell has spent his tenure as Governor showing the country how to take the lead in education, and the families of Georgia are the beneficiaries."

ACTIVITIES

Georgia's Office of School Readiness administers the Prekindergarten Program; licenses private child care learning centers containing Pre-K Programs; manages the Child and Adult Care Food Program and Summer Food Services Program; and is responsible for the Head Start Collaboration Project. Other partners include:

- Georgia State University's Applied Research Center, which is conducting a 12-year longitudinal study of the Pre-K program;
- Public and private Pre-K providers, such as schools, hospitals, child care centers, and community organizations; and
- Local Coordinating Councils that engage parents, public and private providers, health officials, educators, and members of the business community in sharing resources and information to support the local Pre-K programs.

The Pre-K program encourages parents to actively participate in their children's learning.

The Pre-K program strongly encourages parents to get involved with their child's learning. Each family receives a special edition of *The Little Engine That Could,* with a personal message from Governor Miller emphasizing the value of persistence. Parents are encouraged to read to their children, reinforce learning at home, volunteer at the Pre-K classroom, attend parent/teacher conferences, and participate in parent education and life skills classes offered by the majority of Pre-K sites.

Resource Coordinators, available at every Pre-K site, link parents to services that promote stability and help each child to prepare for kindergarten. Parents can seek health services for their child, attend child development seminars, and receive employment and training counseling for their personal development. At-risk children, or those who are eligible for free or reduced-fee meals, also may receive subsidized before- and after-school care, meals, and transportation to and from the school. Resource coordinators also help parents to plan their child's transition from Pre-K to kindergarten.

Pre-K lessons and strategies are available through the Internet.

OSR contracts with the Department of Early Education at Georgia State University (GSU) to develop and deliver training for prekindergarten staff. An integral part of this training is a *Best Practices Portfolio* developed by GSU to offer teachers a collection of appropriate lessons and strategies. GSU staff conduct two-day in-service workshops throughout the year in locations around the state to train staff in best practices. Best Practice Lessons also are available through the Internet at http://www.osr.state.ga.us/bestprac/intro.htm.

RESOURCES

In 1997, the Pre-K programs received $210 million from the Georgia Lottery for Education. Lottery dollars pay for program equipment, materials, teacher salaries, and one-time start-up funds to equip new classrooms. Pre-K sites also benefit from other state and federal resources:

- The Georgia Department of Human Resources provides eligible, at-risk children before- and after-school wraparound services through a contractual arrangement with OSR.
- The U.S. Department of Agriculture subsidizes meals for eligible low-income children through the Child and Adult Care Food Program.
- Forty percent of Head Start programs receive state lottery dollars to supplement federal funding in order to provide full-day, full-school-year prekindergarten for Head Start children.

RESULTS

In the fall of 1996, the state contracted with the Applied Research Center at Georgia State University to begin a study of Pre-K program participants. The 12-year longitudinal study will track 4,000 Pre-K program students, half of whom are at-risk, through their educational careers. The state will use the findings of the study for ongoing program management and policy development. In addition, the study is intended to contribute to parent, teacher, and policymaker understanding of how young children develop and benefit from various educational experiences.

During the first year of the study (1996-97 school year) the research team examined 220 Pre-K classrooms. Information was collected through on-site interviews with directors and teachers, two teacher phone surveys, on-site classroom observation, student ratings completed by teachers, and phone surveys with parents. Key findings from the first year (1996-97) were very positive.

- Parents feel well informed about their children's progress; 56% of parents have weekly, unscheduled discussions with teachers and 59% report attending monthly scheduled conferences.
- Parents are very satisfied with Pre-K teachers and directors. They report that teachers and directors are available for conferences, have the children's best interest in mind, and keep parents informed.
- A majority of parents (56%) report that the time they spend with their children has increased as a result of their participation in the Pre-K program.
- Seventy-nine percent of Pre-K lead teachers in the sample are certified in early childhood or a related field, and an additional 10% have a Child Development Associate or Child Care Professional credential.
- The average Pre-K classroom has 16 out of the 18 elements deemed necessary for high-quality Pre-K classrooms.

In the second year of the study (1997-98 school year), researchers followed the Pre-K children in approximately 1,850 kindergarten classrooms across the state. They focused on the resources and structure of kindergarten classes; attitudes, philosophies, and methods of kindergarten teachers; and skill levels of kindergarten students and their school readiness for the first grade. Information was collected through written surveys with principals and teachers, phone surveys with teachers, student ratings completed by teachers, phone surveys with parents, and on-site observations in about 300 classrooms. The study will continue with similar data collection efforts until children in the study reach twelfth grade.

NEXT STEPS

'The Pre-K program is often described as [Governor] Miller's 'pet project.' But it may well end up being called his legacy" (Atlanta Journal and Constitution, *November 1997).*

According to popular opinion in Georgia, the Pre-K program will survive any changes in political leadership, despite its close association with Goveror Miller. State Senator Richard Marable says, "It would be like taking a driver's license away from a 16-year-old. Once you know what it's like to have it, you can't imagine life without it." Indeed, parental support for the Pre-K program is very strong. It was one of the driving forces behind the 1998 passage of a constitutional referendum making the Pre-K Program the second-highest priority (after HOPE college scholarships) for lottery funds. This measure will ensure a consistent source of future funding for the preschool program.

Other states are beginning to show interest in starting similar Pre-K programs, and are looking to Georgia on how to begin or expand their own prekindergarten program. Missouri, for example, is planning to use its state lottery as a funding mechanism for early childhood education and has contacted OSR for technical assistance. In September 1998, 36 states sent representatives to a national conference on early education hosted by Governor Miller. The Pre-K program was a central part of the agenda.

SUCCESS STORIES

DeKalb County Public Schools

In 1991, DeKalb County Public Schools began to offer a Pre-K Program to four-year-olds using federal Title I "Improving America's Schools" funds to support two classrooms. Since then, the Georgia Lottery has financed 94 additional prekindergarten classrooms for county public schools, and Title I continues to fund four Pre-K classrooms. Lottery proceeds have also been used over the years to increase the number of family resource coordinators to 13, and have assisted in refining the program's instructional, assessment, and outcome goals.

DeKalb County makes a concerted effort to redefine "education" as beginning at the prekindergarten level. The county school system adheres to the philosophy that Pre-K education is not merely an add-on service, but an integrated component of the academic curriculum. The schools use the High Scope Approach to instruction and designed a periodic assessment for tracking annual student developmental progress. The assessment enables teachers to observe how students are progressing and to tailor services to each child's individual educational needs. During the 1994-95 school year, the program added a YMCA-operated after-school care component for children whose parents have an annual income of $35,000 or less. Parents pay a sliding fee of up to $42 a week for after-school care, and children are able to stay at the school until 6:30 pm. DeKalb County also provides bus service to transport 1,500 children to and from the school.
In order to help integrate the Pre-K program into the public schools, the DeKalb County Central Office holds workshops for principals to help them learn about the program. The county recommends that other public schools conduct these workshops prior to implementing a Pre-K program in order to build support for the program, create a smoother transition, and ensure that the school system is able to provide classrooms and other services the program requires.

DeKalb County has generated $1.3 million in local funding for the Pre-K Program. Parental support for the program assisted the public schools in lobbying the local board for general funds to add financing for the program. This increased revenue was critical in order to support Pre-K teacher salaries. In Georgia, all public school teachers (including Pre-K) are state certified and, therefore, subject to the same salary scale and benefits as K-12 instructors.

The Sheltering Arms Center: A Private Center

The Sheltering Arms Center is a private child development center that offers both the Georgia Pre-K Program and other preschool services for younger children. It is one of the oldest private child care providers in the country and currently operates 13 centers throughout the state. Its largest facility is located in Atlanta and primarily serves children of low-income families. Like other Pre-K sites, a community resource coordinator helps families access services such as health care, transportation, financial counseling, and employment training and placement. It is committed to serving no more than 15 percent of children whose families can pay the full fee. Most of the low- to moderate-income families served by the center have incomes of less than $50,000 a year, with 95 percent of the children receiving a government child care subsidy. Pre-K funds enable the center to shift scarce resources toward the birth-to-three-years-old classrooms, which enhances services available to this younger population.

Sheltering Arms teaches children using its personally developed and OSR-approved curriculum, which structures learning around a series of activities focused on a central theme. The organization encourages parents to volunteer at the center and offers monthly classes on life skills and child development. The center also assists parents and children with the transition to kindergarten. A critical component of this process is maintaining an ongoing relationship with area schools by: consulting with school staff; offering field trips for parents and children to the kindergarten classes; bringing in kindergarten teachers to meet the children; sharing children's files and academic records with schools; and maintaining connections between the family resource coordinator at the center and the coordinator at the school.

While Sheltering Arms houses the Pre-K program and manages the contract, the organization shares several Pre-K services with area family child care providers. For example, family child care providers are able to use Sheltering Arms' lesson plans, educational videos, and resource coordination services, and can attend monthly life development classes. This unique cooperative arrangement enables Sheltering Arms to extend the reach of the Pre-K program to enhance the quality of area child care.

One of the challenges currently confronting the center is the ability to retain well-qualified teachers who may leave to accept Pre-K positions in the public schools. Because the state's public school system provides an enhanced package of employee benefits and more job stability than some of the state's private providers, positions are often more desirable.

SUCCESS FACTORS

The personal involvement of the governor.	Governor Miller's commitment to this program has been essential to its success.
The decision to supplement versus supplant existing educational programs.	This approach helped to ensure public support and the passage of Governor Miller's 1992 referendum that resulted in the Georgia Lottery for Education and the preschool program.
Universal eligibility.	All four-year-old children are eligible to attend the Pre-K program, which acknowledges that all children benefit from early education.
Sufficient funding to properly implement the program.	The $210 million infused into the program annually by the Georgia Lottery for Education provides the program with a secure financial base. Parental support of the program has even leveraged additional funds in some school districts, like Dekalb County, where Pre-K teachers receive the same pay increases as public school teachers.
Recognition of the difference between Pre-K and older grades.	The Pre-K program knows that creating quality programs means making sure that Pre-K programs are not watered-down versions of elementary school, but programs with a distinct set of standards and practices. To this end, the initiative makes a point of getting school superintendents, school board members, and principals on board early and educating them about Pre-K , early intervention, and brain-development research that shows the importance of early experiences.
The use of public and private providers of care.	The demand for Pre-K exceeded the classroom space available in public schools. The decision to fund private providers allowed the state to put more resources toward Pre-K services instead of building more classrooms. The use of both public and private Pre-K providers also improved relationships between public schools and private child care providers. These two sectors have come together to share ideas, and training, and to help smooth children's transition to elementary school. A healthy level of competition between the two groups also has promoted better-quality programs in both sectors.

Parental choice.

Parents have choices about where to send their children for Pre-K, and Pre-K classrooms vary in their setting and curricula. If they are income eligible, parents can also choose among family support services, including health, transportation, and before- and after-school care.

Effective use of technology.

"When possible, automate," explains Jennifer Cambern, Deputy Director of OSR. To streamline the application and licensing processes, OSR has created a toll-free number for providers, parents, or concerned citizens. Pre-K teachers can submit student rosters via the Internet. An automated reapplication for Pre-K providers and licensing is in place. An integrated database of participants in the Pre-K Program, Summer Food Services Program, and Child and Adult Care Food Program allows OSR to identify overlap and reduce duplication of applications.

A simple financial contracting, payment, and reporting system with clear methods for allocating resources.

Clear policies let everyone know what to expect, thus eliminating misunderstandings that can lead to unnecessary conflicts. When contracting with both the public and the private sector, it is especially important to explain any differences in reimbursement.

A unifying goal and "can-do" attitude.

All people associated with OSR are a team working toward the goal of preparing children to succeed in school. For example, child care licensing staff are charged with the responsibility of helping child care providers succeed, rather than focusing on areas of failure. If a program does not meet the standards, then licensors link providers with technical assistance to improve their program.

ADVICE FOR OTHER PARTNERSHIPS

Be prepared for turf struggles.

"Whose program is it?" was a challenging question at the beginning of the program.

Find a champion.

Governor Zell Miller's high level of personal involvement in the program was essential to its success. When critics threatened the future of the program, the Governor recalled how his mother read

The Little Engine That Could to him and taught him about the importance of persistence. Governor Miller invoked the "Little Engine" as a symbol for the Pre-K program, and his persistence paid off.

Find a symbol that markets your initiative.

The "Little Engine" appears on the letterhead and all the Georgia Pre-K materials, creating an easily recognizable symbol of the program.

Make it a public-private partnership.

Both private child care providers and public schools are necessary partners to meet the demand for universal prekindergarten. Make sure that both are engaged in the process from the beginning. Funding can then go toward services for children, rather than for capital outlay expenses.

Listen to parents and providers, researchers and critics.

They can all provide you with valuable insights on how to improve your program.

Be prepared for quick growth and develop strategies to control it.

Anticipate great demand. Give new sites funding for one class, then increase funding if they are successful. Prevent displacement of infant/toddler classes by Pre-K classes. Be cognizant of the mix of ages and rooms for children in individual centers, and try to maintain arrangements that were in place prior to the Pre-K Program.

Hold the line on quality.

When pilot programs expand statewide, the quality of the program can suffer. Establish criteria for funding allocations, teacher credentials, curricula, student-teacher ratios, health, and safety, and do not waiver as the program grows. Defund those who are out of compliance. Remember, a few bad apples can spoil a good initiative. In Georgia, there is an emphasis on promoting children's readiness for school, not on day care. Children receive 6.5 hours of educational programming each day. The ratio is one teacher for 10 students. There are 20 students in a classroom, with one lead teacher and one assistant teacher.

Publicize and build on your activities and accomplishments.

Letting people know what you are up to is an important way to gain their interest and support in your initiative.

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FINANCING QUALITY CHILD CARE IN INDIANA

"New research on the development of children's brains between birth and age 3 shows us how important it is for all children to have the safe, stimulating care that will help them enter school ready to learn. [The Child Care Symposium Project] is an investment in Indiana's future, as well as a help to its current workforce."

Indiana Governor Frank O'Bannon

In Indiana, public and private sectors are partnered in a complex dance to raise the quality of child care. Each partner has its own rhythm and reason for participating, but together they create a harmony that is greater than the sum of its parts. As the tempo increases, the lead constantly changes. Yet because of the time and attention given to creating a climate of mutual respect and collaboration, no one is particularly concerned about who receives credit as the choreographer. To give you a sense of the dance, this case study focuses on two movements—the Indiana Child Care Symposium Initiative and the Indiana Child Care Fund.

THE INDIANA CHILD CARE SYMPOSIUM PROJECT

On November 15, 1995, the Child Care Action Campaign (CCAC) of New York City and the Indiana Family and Social Services Administration (FSSA) jointly convened the first Indiana Symposium on Child Care Financing. A bipartisan event, the symposium was co-chaired by the state's then-Democratic First Lady, Susan Bayh, and Charlene Lugar, the wife of Republican U.S. Senator Richard Lugar. Twenty-six corporate sponsors paid $2,000 each to finance the event. The mission of the symposium: to increase the role of private-sector employers as leaders on child care issues and investors in creating high-quality child care for working families. Seventeen counties participated in the first year.

Growth of the Symposium Teams

1995	*17 counties*
1996	*50 counties*
1997	*64 counties*
1998	*92 counties*

In 1998, all 92 counties have the opportunity to build public-private partnerships for child care. First Lady Judy O'Bannon and Mrs. Charlene Lugar currently serve as the honorary co-chairs, and organizers have changed the focus from an annual symposium to ongoing technical assistance sessions. Now, experts from national and state organizations, state government, philanthropies, and the business community guide teams in workshop topics they have identified. Team members include parents and public and private sector leaders. They represent diverse interests such as local government, major employers, minority businesses, foundations, financial institutions, the chamber of commerce, the private industry council, health, education, and child care. Carole Stein of the Indiana Family and Social Services Administration explains, "We knew that without diverse membership on the teams, there would be little chance of a county making changes."

State funding for Symposium Teams doubled from $3 million in 1997 to $6 million in 1998.

In response to the great interest shown in creating public-private partnerships, Governor Frank O'Bannon allocated $3 million from the Child Care and Development Fund (CCDF) to this initiative in Fiscal Year 1997. In 1998 he doubled the state contribution to $6 million. The only limitation is the federal restriction on using the CCDF to build child care facilities. County teams are encouraged to establish partnerships with the Department of Commerce, Community Focus Funds, and the Department of Agriculture Rural Development Programs. These programs assist with the brick- and mortar-dollars to meet child care facility development needs.

In order to join the Child Care Financing Symposium Initiative, County teams had to submit proposals to the FSSA. Each proposal had to identify strategies and outcomes for reaching one or more of the five following goals:

- Build public awareness of local child care needs;
- Build public-private partnerships for child care;
- Expand the supply of high-quality child care;
- Increase the number of credentialed child care providers; and
- Reduce the high rate of turnover among child care professionals.

To build on existing statewide efforts to improve the lives of children and families, teams submitted proposals through Step Ahead Councils, which exist in every county. These local councils have broad community representation. Their purpose is to make early care and education, family support, health and nutrition, and mental health services more accessible and responsive to families. In some counties, the Step Ahead Council developed and now administers the symposium initiative. In other counties, a member of the council's child care committee administers the project through an affiliation with a private organization in the community.

Plans were approved based on the strength of the team and the quality of its plan. FSSA distributed funds through the Step Ahead Councils or their designees. To assess results, each team demonstrates progress toward its outcomes through quarterly reports to the FSSA. Focusing on outcomes allows the state to chart progess while giving communities flexibility to design programs that address local needs.

Symposium Team Mentors
Eli Lilly and Co.
Cinergy Corporation
NIPSCO
Conseco
Wishard Health Services
Ice, Miller, Donadio & Ryan

Wisely, the state didn't stop with providing funding. Carole Stein explains, "We realized the counties had $3 million out there. But, did they really know what the next steps were?" To make sure that the initiative would make a difference, ongoing support was provided. A corporate mentor program was created to provide additional expertise to teams in financing, marketing, and the managing of the public-private partnerships. Cinergy Corporation, a utility company, provides many of the mentors through its Symposium Corporate Mentor Initiative. Local teams benefit from the expertise of the Cinergy managers, and Cinergy develops a community presence in the increasing competitive utility market.

ACTIVITIES

"We believe that child care is not just a woman's issue but everyone's issue. It's about strengthening our families. It's about creating a more productive workforce and it's about our state's economic development. Improving the quality of child care is a statewide priority for us."
Carole Stein, Indiana Family and Social Services Administration

Most of the counties began with an assessment of the specific child care needs in the area, and then designed a plan to address these needs. A 1998 analysis of 68 county projects by Purdue University showed that 96 percent of the local projects are attempting to improve child care quality and/or increase the number of children who can be served. Many of these are also working to raise community awareness of child care issues.

More than 300 providers received their CDA in 1998 alone.

Providing training is the most popular quality improvement strategy. Sixty-four counties are offering opportunities for staff to receive a Child Development Associate (CDA) credential or other training. In 1998 alone, more than 300 providers received their CDA credential. This is a dramatic increase, as only 1,884 Indiana providers have received their CDA during the past thirty years. Increasing the supply of child care also is a high priority for many counties. Most efforts to increase the number of spaces available are targeting infant and toddler care (18 counties) and child care during second- and third-shift schedules (15 counties). A county-by-county description of initiatives is available through the Internet at <http://www.ai.org/fssa/HTML/inChildFinancing.html>.

RESULTS

An evaluation of the Symposium Teams will be available in March 1999.

Teams are producing a variety of results, including new and refurbished child care centers, employer-supported child care training funds, family child care loan funds, mentoring for infant-care providers, employee surveys, media coverage, business consortiums, and increased public awareness. New alliances are also forming, like the faith community and public housing authorities joining forces to offer child care in public housing complexes. The Child and Family Studies Department at Purdue University will measure the impact of the teams through a statewide evaluation that seeks to answer two questions: what are the impacts of the symposium on Indiana counties? and, how do public-private partnerships engage in local planning processes that result in expanded and enhanced child care quality? The evaluation will also produce a guide on financing strategies. The evaluation began in October 1997, and the release of the final report is scheduled for March 1999.

NEXT STEPS

Ultimately, the long-term future of local Child Care Symposium teams depends on the strength and longevity of the individual teams. Several teams were well established before state funding became available. The additional funds gave them the opportunity to expand their focus. Others formed because of the initiative. Many of these are using the state funds to pay the administrative expenses during the frequently long process of identifying team goals and assessing the community's child care needs. Because this "glue money" is necessary for the success of the team but difficult to raise from outside sources, their future, at this point, depends on the continued financial support and technical assistance from the state.

SUCCESS STORIES

Newton County

Newton County is rural, with a total population of 14,000. Licensed child care is scarce, yet 58 percent of women with children under age 5 work. Many residents commute to factories in neighboring counties and require accessible, stable child care. Under the coordination of the local Step Ahead

Coordinator, the county Child Care Symposium initiative received $150,000 to create a preschool for special needs children and to increase the number of children served in infant and after-school programs. The county team—which included representation from the Step Ahead Council, the two school systems in the county, the local workforce development council, county commissioners, Purdue Cooperative Extension Services, the visiting nurses association, the rural crisis center, and local businesses—worked closely with the county's two school districts. With the initiative's support, the South Newton School System established a preschool program that serves children from the Head Start waiting list, and the North Newton School System opened after-school programs in each of their three schools. The local Head Start also licensed one of its sites to offer infant care. Demand is so great that a waiting list was begun within three months after that center opened. Future projects include creating a community education center to provide educational opportunities for residents from infants to seniors. All of the services generated with the child care symposium initiative funds have the ability to be self-sustaining. However, the state funds were necessary to generate the momentum that led to the creation of these services.

Dekalb County

Dekalb County is another rural county with a growing business community and no licensed child care. To meet the need for quality care, a subcommittee of the local Step Ahead Council partnered with private-sector community leaders. The team received $30,000 to build a multigenerational community center that will include a licensed child care center for 122 children. Funds were pooled from the child care symposium initiative, Step Ahead, and federal funds to encourage families to move from welfare to work. Additional funds were leveraged from the United Way, the Dekko Foundation, and the Lilly Endowment, which matches funds raised in local communities.

The Dekalb County team has hired an outside consultant to coordinate the child care financing team and to facilitate the development of the community center. In addition to the community center, the Dekalb team is surveying local employers on the child care needs of their employees and building an endowment fund to increase the wages of child care workers.

"The bottom line is that our efforts to support employees' work-family priorities are good business. These are neither 'perks' nor 'giveaways.' These tools will help us attract, motivate, and retain people who are more likely to be more dedicated, more focused, more innovative, and more productive.'"
Randall L. Tobias, Former Chairman of Eli Lilly and Company

The Indiana Child Care Fund addresses the statewide child care issues identified by the Symposium Teams.

The process of working together on the Indiana Child Care Symposium Initiative led a core group of public- and private-sector stakeholders to come together and create a more permanent and efficient strategy to meet the statewide needs for better quality child care. Carole Stein from FSSA and Candice Lange, a mentor from the Eli Lilly Corporation, were catalysts in forming what became the Indiana Child Care Fund only 18 months after they first thought of the idea. At Eli Lilly, Candice Lange had been deeply involved with several child care quality-improvement initiatives in the company and out in the community. "The problem was," she explains, "it felt like we were watering a desert. It was like the ground soaked up every dollar we put into it and we still couldn't see a result. We put a lot of time and effort into a few locations and then realized that we had issues across the state, and that we couldn't fix it in this one place without finding issues everywhere." Candice Lange and her colleagues at Eli Lilly wanted to do more than water the desert. Fortunately, others felt the same way, including utility companies, hospitals and health care providers, foundations, universities, child care providers, and government officials representing economic development, child care, workforce development, and social services offices.

<u>*Child Care Fund Contributors*</u>

- *Indiana Family and Social Services Administration*
- *Cinergy Corporation*
- *Cummins Engine*
- *Eli Lilly and Company.*
- *Lincoln National Corporation*
- *Ivy Tech State College*
- *Wishard Health Services*
- *Dekko Foundation*
- *NIPSCO*
- *Ice, Miller, Donadio & Ryan*

In December 1997, Governor Frank O'Bannon and several public- and private-sector leaders launched the Indiana Child Care Fund. The fund is managed by a partnership that will raise corporate, foundation, and other private contributions to address the statewide needs identified by the symposium initiative teams. Over $300,000 in private dollars was pledged to the fund prior to the December launch. The Indiana Donor's Alliance, a 501(c)3 nonprofit entity that represents 70 community foundations, is the official home of the Fund. Fund board members are currently preparing a fundraising campaign and envision creating a productive endowment and operating fund to support future state and county efforts to build a system of quality child care.

ACTIVITIES

Board members meet monthly at the Children's Museum of Indianapolis, and the initial meetings focused on the purpose and goals of the fund. Recently, the board has turned its attention to developing bylaws to govern the fund. Challenges include resolving legal questions such as how to blend public and private funds and how to give the Governor the authority to appoint members to the board when there is no statutory language granting this authority. Board members say that meeting in the nationally acclaimed Children's Museum of Indianapolis inspires them to stay motivated as they tackle these mundane, yet critical-for-success procedural issues.

The board has also established a program priority committee to research and recommend programs for funding. After several months of studying the symposium grants and best practices from around the country, the committee determined that improving the quality of child care and developing an approach to reach businesses were priorities. The committee also recommended that the fund focus on statewide initiatives rather than duplicate the symposium's efforts to meet county needs. In response, the board of the Child Care Fund decided to fund two projects. The first of these is to create a tool kit to help Child Care Symposium teams convey the importance of investing in child care to local employers. The second is to implement an Indiana design of the North Carolina TEACH Early Childhood® Project (Teacher Education And Compensation Helps) that has as its goal to reduce turnover among child care providers by increasing educational opportunities and compensation.

NEXT STEPS

The future of the Child Care Fund depends on the financial support of the private sector. To make a favorable impression on potential donors, the fund has focused on showing early successes. In

April 1998, the tool kit was published, and in the first month over 2,500 copies were distributed. The early popularity of the tool kit suggests that it may pay for itself, creating an early success for the Child Care Fund. Other successes include a collaboration among Indiana's steel companies to open a child care center for 200 children, the Subaru automobile plant investigating child care options for its employees, and an industrial park opening a child care center that provides care 24 hours a day, 7 days a week.

SUCCESS STORIES

Child Care: It's Good Business—Indiana Tool Kit for Employers and Community Planners

The Child Care Fund contracted with Purdue University to research and develop a tool kit to help symposium teams make a business case to local employers for why they should invest in quality child care. "We deliberately designed the kit to look businesslike. You don't see pink and blue or choo-choo trains anywhere in the kit," explains Carole Stein. "Instead, we began with a brochure that asks, 'Can you name Indiana's most valuable natural resource?' When it is opened, the reader sees a picture of a child." The kit has a number of parts, including: the business case for quality child care that is supported by quotes from CEOs who are investing in child care; a guide for community advocates with specific tips and strategies for approaching local businesses; samples of employee survey tools; local community contacts; and pre-designed presentation materials based on the information in the tool kit. Local teams receive 12 copies free of charge and pay $20 for each additional copy.

T.E.A.C.H. Early Childhood® Project

To support the career development of child care providers, the Child Care Fund selected a local nonprofit organization to administer the T.E.A.C.H. Early Childhood® Project (Teacher Education And Compensation Helps). T.E.A.C.H. provides scholarships to child care providers for professional development, and those who complete their coursework receive a one-time bonus or salary increase. The cost of the training and bonuses is shared by the participant, the sponsoring child care program, and the Child Care Fund. An estimated $200,000 will be used from the fund to pay for the Indiana T.E.A.C.H. program in the first year. The

T.E.A.C.H. program originated in North Carolina, where over 2,400 teachers, directors, and family child care providers have completed training for a child care credential using a T.E.A.C.H. scholarship.

SUCCESS FACTORS

Commitment from the top. A successful partnership needs the guidance and participation of key leaders who commit their time and energy to strengthening the partnership. Governor Frank O'Bannon and multiple business leaders have provided this commitment in Indiana.

Equality and diversity. The symposium teams and the Child Care Fund had equal representation from the public and private sectors from the beginning. Since the mission of the two initiatives is to engage the private sector in improving the quality of child care, the private sector must have an early and active role in the partnership.

Good leaders, good listeners, and patience. Candice Lange and Carole Stein made sure that the meetings of the Child Care Fund had a clear agenda, and respected the time commitments of board members by beginning and ending meetings on schedule. They were also skilled facilitators, making sure that everyone had a chance to present his or her perspective. But even with good facilitators and motivated partners, partnerships take time to build the trust that is necessary to move forward, and patience is required.

Selective membership. Members of the board of the Child Care Fund were selected because they were already convinced of the mission of the fund and they had support from their senior managers to be actively involved. The Child Care Fund also had support from several large corporations, which gave the partnership credibility from the very beginning.

Nonpartisanship and neutral ground. Every effort has been made to keep child care a nonpartisan issue. Currently, First Lady Judy O'Bannon and Mrs. Charlene Lugar serve as honorary co-chairs of the symposium initiative and the child care fund. The board of the Child Care Fund meets at the Children's Museum of Indianapolis because it is centrally located and politically neutral. It represents children, not government or business. Using the Indiana Donors Alliance as a fiscal agent also provides a neutral ground for the fund. This nonprofit organization represents over 70 local community foundations.

Local infrastructure.

The county-based Step Ahead Councils designed to coordinate children and family policy at the local level provided an existing infrastructure for the symposium teams. Although not all counties used their Step Ahead Council for their symposium team, the concept of creating diverse teams was not new in Indiana. In fact, the challenge was to build on the existing infrastructure without duplicating efforts. As things have turned out, both initiatives have benefited. The symposium initiative built on a foundation created by Step Ahead. Business and private-sector participation has strengthened the local Step Ahead Council planning process.

Good timing.

A strong economy and low unemployment rate have prompted businesses to invest in attracting and retaining employees. Leading corporations in Indiana understood that child care is essential for many employees to be productive and reliable workers. At the same time, the welfare reform legislation of 1996 established work requirements for families receiving cash assistance, and gave states new money to improve the availability of child care for individuals moving from welfare to work. The combination of these events gave public- and private-sector partners reasons to work together.

ADVICE FOR OTHER PARTNERSHIPS

Find the common ground when creating goals.

Identify the overlapping priorities among partners and build on this common ground. Knowing that their concerns will be met can energize partners and motivate them to dedicate the time and resources necessary for success. Once the goals are established, the strategy to achieve these goals can be flexible.

Do a few things well.

Don't overextend the partnership. Demonstrating solid success in a few areas will keep momentum going and lead to future successes.

Be aware of statewide needs. Respond to community needs.

Like families, communities have a diverse range of needs. Your success depends on creating an initiative that gives communities flexibility to address their needs.

Avoid reinventing the wheel.

There are lots of good ideas out there already that can help a new initiative get off to a good start. Indiana used the existing Step Ahead Councils rather than create a new infrastructure for a new initiative. It was decided to adapt the T.E.A.C.H. Early Childhood® Project, which has proven successful, rather than to invent something new. In addition, the Fund's board has devoted time to research the nation's most promising practices.

Use peer recruitment to engage businesses in effective partnerships.

Cinergy's Symposium Corporate Mentors volunteered to convene meetings of employers in the large rural areas that contain few large businesses, knowing that businesses are more likely to get involved if their peers invite them. This strategy is innovative and replicable. Utility companies are good partners because they have employees throughout the state and the impending deregulation of electricity gives them an incentive to be visible in activities at the community level.

Involve a wide range of public- and private-sector partners.

The child care solutions created by the partnerships are effective because they draw on the knowledge, resources, and diverse perspectives that all of the Indiana partners bring to the table. Diversity also builds credibility in a broader community.

Have realistic expectations. Be patient.

Solving the child care challenge through partnering takes a long time. Relationships take time to establish and maintain, and must be seasoned with constant communication. Partners must have patience to move forward step by step over time to accomplish their goals. The awareness and commitment to remain actively involved over time has been, and will remain, a key element for success.

Evaluate your efforts.

The evaluation being conducted by Purdue University will help Indiana identify its many accomplishments and challenges still to be met. It will also help the state to reshape its initiatives, as necessary, to be even more effective and successful. In addition, it will identify lessons learned that other states can build upon. Often, when people are involved in the day-today work of an initiative, they lose track of the big picture. An evaluation can help you step back and see your efforts through outside, objective eyes—an essential step for successful implementation and replication.

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SMART START: A GOOD BEGINNING FOR ALL OF NORTH CAROLINA'S CHILDREN

"Smart Start is the foundation for successful, healthy children and a healthy economy," explains Governor Jim Hunt. "It's about providing every child and every parent with access to quality, affordable child care, health care, and family support."

Smart Start was launched in 1993 to ensure that every child in North Carolina begins school healthy and ready to succeed. It is not just another program, but rather a statewide initiative championed by the governor that brings government, the nonprofit sector, and business together at state and local levels to improve the lives of children and families.

The need for Smart Start is well-documented. North Carolina is ranked among the 12 worst states in the nation in the health and well-being of its children. Child care, family, and health care services are fragmented and inadequate. More than 65% of North Carolina mothers with children under the age of six work outside the home. There are not enough child care spaces available, and too many existing spaces are in low-quality programs. This case study describes how Smart Start is working at the state and county level to improve the lives of children and families.

SMART START

Five years after its start, Smart Start has expanded statewide. Fifty-five counties are now delivering services, while the remaining 45 have completed local plans and begun service delivery in January, 1999.

In July 1993, Smart Start legislation was passed. It authorized creation of a state-level public-private partnership to provide funding and technical assistance to county-level public-private partnerships that would be established to design and implement quality services for children based on community needs.

Twelve "pioneer" partnerships representing a cross section of needs and resources, diverse geographical locations, and all congressional districts were funded. County teams were challenged to dream, to envision a better future for their children and to plan services to make those dreams come true.

In that first year, Smart Start "pioneers" eliminated waiting lists for child care, increased child care subsidies for needy families, and improved child care by providing technical assistance to providers, repairing facilities, and purchasing basic equipment. Child care teachers received funds to help complete state certification degree programs, which led to better pay and less turnover. Counties also improved delivery of family health and other family services.

Local partnership boards assess the needs of children and families in the community, as well as the resources and services available to meet those needs. Based on this assessment, a comprehensive plan is developed that integrates existing resources with requested Smart Start funding to create a continuum of services for young children in the community.

The initiative's incremental growth has been deliberate, with a new wave of partnerships being added each year. Five years after it began, the program has expanded statewide. Fifty-five counties are now delivering services, while the remaining 45 have completed local plans and will begin service delivery in 1999. As people in counties continue to work together over the years, they are getting a different handle on needs and solutions and are using their resources more creatively and wisely. This can be seen in The Down East Partnership for Children (DEPC), which operates in mostly rural Nash and Edgecombe counties, 60 miles northeast of Raleigh, the state capital. By "thinking outside the box," the DEPC has woven together an array of services to meet its goal of ensuring that every child gets a good start in life, ranging from screening children for lead poisoning to providing money to improve child care facilities. According to Henrietta Zalkind, Executive Director, "The success of the Down East partnership is a testament to the power of the community's collective vision."

Each local partnership is a private, nonprofit organization with its own Board of Trustees. The legislation defines the agencies and organizations that should be represented on local governing boards. Local partnerships decide upon members within those parameters. Members include Directors of the Departments of Social Services, Mental Health, and Health, Head Start, the county library, and the local school system. Boards also include local elected officials, ministers, business leaders, child care providers, and parents. The local structure is mirrored at the state level through the governing board of the North Carolina Partnership for Children (NCPC), which provides funding and technical assistance to county partnerships in the areas of program development, administration, organizational development, communication, fiscal management, technology, contracts management, and fundraising.

Local partnership boards assess the needs of children and families in the community, as well as resources and services present to meet those needs. Based on this assessment, a comprehensive plan is developed that integrates existing resources with requested Smart Start funding to create a continuum of services for children ages birth to 5 in the community. In most cases, local partnerships do not provide direct services for children. Usually, they partner with other organizations and agencies, sharing both resources and expertise.

Once a plan has been developed and approved by the local board, it is submitted to the NCPC for review. Realizing the importance of respecting counties' plans and decisions, NCPC has developed a process to help maximize local partnerships' chances for success. NCPC board members, staff, and key stakeholders review each plan at length, make recommendations and request necessary changes to ensure that Smart Start funds are being used effectively and are leveraging other community funds to create the greatest impact possible on children and families. As part of the review process, counties present their plans to a group of state agency leaders. These leaders, in turn, facilitate counties' efforts by identifying how their agency can help in the implementation of local plans.

ACTIVITIES

Core services to be financed with Smart Start Funds include:

- *child care and education quality;*
- *child care and education accessibility and availability;*
- *child care and education affordability;*
- *health and safety;*
- *family support; and*
- *other discretionary services.*

The Planning and Oversight Committee of the NCPC's Board of Directors has developed a set of core services that can be financed with Smart Start funds to help county partnerships develop and implement programs that have a direct impact on school readiness.

North Carolina's counties are rural and urban, with differing needs and resources. As a result, early county plans proposed a wide variety of activities. Many legislators, state administrators, and local partnership board members became concerned that the impact on child care and early education would be watered down and that the overall goal of school readiness would not be met. In July 1996, the legislature mandated that 30% of all Smart Start service funds be spent on child care subsidies. While this mandate reduced the amount of funding that local partnerships could control, it helped communities stay focused on the original intent of the initiative: providing subsidies for direct services to young children to promote school readiness. Today, 42% of direct service funds (more than $42 million) are spent on child care subsidies.

RESOURCES

In 1998, state funds for Smart Start exceed $150 million. In addition, the NCPC is mandated by the General Assembly to raise one dollar for every $10 it receives in state funding, and is doing so successfully. In 1998, nearly $11 million in cash and in-kind contributions were received from the private sector.

North Carolina spent $95 million of public funds for Smart Start in FY 1997. In 1998, $57 million in new spending was approved to expand Smart Start to all 100 counties and to provide more money for existing counties.

On the private-sector side, the NCPC is mandated by the General Assembly to raise one dollar for every $10 it receives in state funding, and is doing so successfully. According to Gerry Cobb, NCPC Development Director, "The level of fundraising has increased tremendously over the past two years."

Private-sector support is making an impact on Smart Start programs and services. In 1998, nearly $11 million in cash and in-kind contributions were received from the private sector. Here are but a few of many examples of generous contributions: Wachovia, NationsBank, First Union, and Food Lion have pledged a total of $7 million to Smart Start; Glaxo Wellcome has contributed $1 million to support maternal and child health projects; and CP&L and Duke Power have each pledged $1 million to help local partnerships provide services to children and families.

Nonprofits and individuals also support Smart Start. The Lakewood Preschool in Charlotte turned a $72,000 Smart Start grant into nearly $700,000 worth of services to support children in its community, with the help of the Charlotte-Mecklenburg schools, which donated land, and Charlotte's Habitat for Humanity, which built the preschool. Volunteer hours recorded statewide for 1998 exceeded 135,000.

Since Smart Start began, more than $30 million in cash and in-kind contributions have been raised, and more than 400,000 volunteer hours have been donated.

RESULTS

According to Columbia University's National Center for Children in Poverty, North Carolina is one of just eight states with a comprehensive, focused plan to promote the well-being of children and families.

Beginning in 1997, county plans required measurable outcomes and strategies for each activity that receives Smart Start funds. Evaluation of activities provides the basis for future funding decisions.

The University of North Carolina's Frank Porter Graham Center (FPG) is conducting a statewide evaluation of Smart Start services. Baseline data on the health and readiness of children were collected in 1995. An initial report from FPG showed significant improvements to the overall quality of child care in the first 18 counties to provide programs and services.

Still in its infancy, Smart Start has already:

- offered higher-quality child care to more than 100,000 children;
- provided training and education to more than 26,000 child care teachers, including more than 7,000 through scholarships from the T.E.A.C.H. Early Childhood® Project (Teacher Education And Compensation Helps), which was started in North Carolina to reduce turnover among child care providers by increasing educational opportunities and compensation;
- provided preventive health care to more than 97,000 children;
- provided parenting and health education to more than 60,000 parents;
- provided child care subsidies to over 50,000 children; and
- created more than 33,500 spaces in child care and education programs.

In addition, each county now submits quarterly reports to NCPC reporting counts for local Smart Start activities. Beginning in 1997, county plans required measurable outcomes and strategies for each activity that receives Smart Start funds. Evaluation of activities provides the basis for future funding decisions.

NEXT STEPS

The governor and NCPC are striving to achieve full funding so that Smart Start will fully serve all 100 counties by the year 2000. At the end of 1996, 55 counties were funded. In 1997, Governor Hunt requested planning funds for the remaining 45 counties. Funds were approved in April 1998, and all 100 counties submitted plans to implement programs and services. In the Governor's FY 1998 budget, the General Assembly approved an additional $57 million in expansion funds, so that every county will have resources for direct services.

SUCCESS STORIES

To celebrate and demonstrate its successes in 1997, local Smart Start partnerships received awards for their accomplishments in providing the following Smart Start core services. These examples represent just a few of Smart Start's many success stories.

Creating Affordable Child Care

In Orange County, the turnover rate of providers has been reduced and the amount of quality, affordable care has been increased, due to the Child Care W.A.G.E.$ Project. Under this project, directors, teachers, and family child care providers in regulated programs are eligible for salary supplements, which are increased with a professional's level of education and tenure in the field. In Orange County, 130 directors, teachers, and family child care providers serving more than 1,800 children are receiving higher wages as a result of this Project. The teacher turnover rate has been reduced from 36% to 22%, the lowest in the state.

Creating Accessible Child Care

Child Care Networks, in collaboration with the Chatham County Partnership for Children, developed a program to reach out to Spanish-speaking families and provide access to training and resource materials on child care, health and safety, and early childhood development. In 1997, nearly 60 children and their families benefited from these services.

Improving the Quality of Child Care

By linking quality enhancement funding with staff development and compensation, the AA Plus program in Mecklenberg County seeks to promote quality through professional development and increased retention. Under this program, AA-licensed facilities may receive quality enhancement funding for staff development and compensation. In one quarter alone, staff from 68 facilities participated in the program, to the benefit of more than 4,000 children.

Providing Comprehensive Health Care

In Burke County, which has only 15 dentists (67 percent less per capita than the state average), approximately 33 percent of children entering kindergarten are in need of serious dental treatment. To address this need, the Burke County Partnership for Children created a community task force to develop a comprehensive dental health plan. As a result, a full-time dental clinic now operates within the Burke County Health Department. In less than two years, 3,427 parents participated in dental education activities and 402 young children were treated.

Delivering Family Support Services

Located in low-income neighborhoods, the BRIDGES project of Cumberland County links families to agencies that can lend support in dealing with issues such as neighborhood crime, drug abuse, child abuse, unemployment, and illiteracy. In 1997, nearly 600 children and families benefited from this program.

SUCCESS FACTORS

A governor who champions the initiative.

Governor Hunt's vision of and commitment to Smart Start is responsible for the creation and early success of the initiative. As a champion, the governor continues to press for increased financial support by the state legislature as he works to build a nonpartisan base of support that will endure when he leaves office.

The ability to recognize and articulate the link between child development, school success, and the state's future economy.

The vision of Smart Start was born out of an awareness of the importance of the first years of life in a child's development and the desire to secure North Carolina's future as a vibrant, economically sound state. The ability of Smart Start leaders to see and then educate legislators, businesses, and local communities about the link between the early years, school success, and North Carolina's future has been integral to the early success of Smart Start.

A vision that addresses common needs.

Both the private and public sectors will benefit from an initiative that serves all children and families with the long-term goal of creating healthy, productive citizens and a strong state economy. As a result, both have been willing to contribute substantial funding and/or services to turn Smart Start's vision into a reality.

The balance between local decision-making and guidance from the state.

North Carolina is a state with large urban and rural counties, each with different resources and needs. Smart Start recognizes that decisions about how best to support communities' needs must be made on the local level by those that live in and know the area. Smart Start also realizes that managing a statewide initiative responsibly and effectively requires oversight at the state level. Its infrastructure has allowed Smart Start to effectively create and maintain a balance between state and local control that is evolving over the years.

Good timing.

A strong economy, an apparent need, and a strong leader in the governor has set the stage for public- and private-sector partners to come together to ensure a strong North Carolina in the future by meeting the needs of North Carolina's children and families today.

Flexibility.

Over the years, Smart Start leaders have adapted the initiative as necessary. For example, the Partnership has created the accountability plan described below and implemented the concept of multi-county partnerships, in which several counties come together and form one partnership.

Ongoing communication among all the partners and with the public.

To foster communication and a growing sense of group identity, the NCPC developed and distributed a new series of materials in the winter of 1997, including a revised logo, Smart Start brochure, posters, counter cards, decals to identify Smart Start–funded agencies, a printed public service announcement, and bookmarks. A new website and the biweekly Smart Start Times newsletter are other examples of strategies the NCPC is using to help partners at both the state and county levels keep in touch with one another. There has been a conscious effort to be sure that partners could describe Smart Start to a neighbor in a way that the initiative would be understood.

ADVICE FOR OTHER PARTNERSHIPS

Make evaluation an integral part of your initiative from the beginning.

Smart Start's evaluation plan was developed and is being conducted by the University of North Carolina's Frank Porter Graham Center. The evaluation looks at Smart Start's efforts to provide quality child care, and family and health services, also and measures short- and long-term change.

Set realistic expectations for change.

Change takes time. Being clear up front about what data can be expected at specific points can help maintain support of funders and decrease conflicts. With the help of evaluation experts, agree on what results will be measured and how and when to measure. Then, as necessary over the years, revisit and adapt your initial decisions. After one year of Smart Start funding, legislators began calling for a demonstration of results. A decision made at the beginning of the initiative not to track the progress of individual children led to continuing questions about results, which became a point of struggle among legislators and state policymakers. In response, the Division of Child Development created a data collection system to track numbers of children being served, as a short-term measure to respond to funders and the general public about the scope and impact of Smart Start.

Be accountable.

In addition to being able to demonstrate results, NCPC learned that it needed to assure the public and the state legislature that there was appropriate oversight and accountability of Smart Start dollars. In response, the NCPC is enforcing tough standards to ensure Smart Start's fiscal integrity and accountability. Smart Start partnerships are subject to annual audits by the Office of the State Auditor and must use a uniform chart of accounts and a standard accounting software system. Board members and directors of local partnerships, as well as other employees who receive or handle Smart Start funds, must be bonded or legally protected. Smart Start partnerships must also use independent payroll services. New partnerships with unsatisfactory financial performance must handle their finances through a centralized accounting and contract management system.

Identify and publicize the cost savings of prevention.

Use statistics and easy-to-read visuals to compare the costs of inadequate early childhood services to what can be saved by providing children and families with the support they need. For example, the NCPC estimates that once Smart Start is fully funded, the total cost will be $330 million. This breaks down to a cost of $1,633 per child, compared to a yearly cost of $20,932 to house a criminal in state prison or $47,283 for a juvenile delinquent to spend a year in a training school.

Develop local constituencies.

Because Smart Start is "owned" by diverse stakeholders and benefits all families at the county level, the program now has broad-based support for increasing state-level Smart Start expenditures. Over the years, there have been many attempts by the legislature to reduce funding and even, at times, to abolish the initiative. Because local citizens have felt a positive impact, they have formed a powerful constituency for Smart Start. Karen Ponder, Program Director of the NCPC, sums it up when she says, " This initiative has something to offer everyone. If you want broad support, you need broad benefit."

Be inclusive.

In the Smart Start legislation, a political compromise was made to allow both supporters and opponents to participate on the State Advisory Board. Though this has been very challenging at times for both sides, it reflects the initiative's commitment to respect and include everyone. In the long run, this has led to Smart Start's success.

Help local communities identify readiness indicators to set the stage for their success. Provide ongoing technical assistance to ensure it.

The Partnership helps communities assess their readiness to deliver Smart Start services by identifying indicators in the following areas: collaboration and strategic planning, organizational development, and accountability. Technical assistance offered by the Partnership helps community team members learn to communicate, collaborate, and implement plans in effective, fiscally responsible ways.

Remember that you don't have to replicate an entire initiative. Sometimes certain aspects can be replicated and/or adapted to help you meet your state or community's goals.

Smart Start began small and has grown incrementally over the years. It is often pointed to as a model of a statewide, comprehensive early childhood initiative that can inform other states and national policy discussions. It has not been replicated in any other state. However, certain elements have been, including T.E.A.C.H. (Teacher Education and Compensation Helps). T.E.A.C.H. has partnered with Smart Start in North Carolina to improve the education of child care providers and reduce teacher turnover. The state-based replication of T.E.A.C.H. is seen in Georgia (using federal child care block grand funds exclusively), Florida, Illinois, New York, and Colorado (which also uses private funds through the American Business Collaboration for Quality Dependent Care).

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