

Partnering with the Private and Philanthropic Sectors

A Governor's Guide to Investing in Early Childhood



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EXECUTIVE SUMMARY

Governors recognize that promoting school readiness is a key strategy for preventing school failure and subsequent costs to society in the form of remedial education services, health and social services, criminal justice services, and lost tax revenue.¹ In 2005, the National Governors Association Center for Best Practices' Task Force on School Readiness identified actions that governors and states can take to support families, schools, and communities in their efforts to ensure all children begin school ready to reach their full potential. Governors identified the impact of early investments in the school readiness equation—children who are healthy and ready to learn when they enter kindergarten have a better chance for school and life success. The task force also concluded that “[a]chieving school readiness cannot be accomplished by any single agency or individual. It requires public-private partnerships and strong leadership from governors.”²

In recent years, several governors have partnered with private and philanthropic leaders to maximize funding and achieve positive outcomes for young children. This guide describes the nature and activities of such early childhood public-private partnerships (partnerships). It aims to help governors and state policymakers navigate through the decisions they will make if they wish to pursue such partnerships in their own state. Detailed profiles describing the governance, funding, programming, and evaluation of the 11 state early childhood public-private partnerships referenced throughout the guide can be found in the appendix.



Why Do Public, Private, and Philanthropic Leaders Support Early Childhood Development?

Science and program evaluation research demonstrate that promoting the healthy development and school readiness of children from birth to age five is an effective strategy for preventing achievement gaps, especially among the nation's most vulnerable children. In response to this research, the public, private, and philanthropic sectors have increasingly launched efforts to support early childhood programs and services. In many states, these sectors recognize that coordinating their efforts through formal partnerships can maximize the impact on young children, prevent duplication of efforts, and ensure the efficient use of resources.

Partnerships bring together diverse resources, perspectives, and expertise that can inform state priorities to build public awareness of the importance of early childhood development and improve the quality and availability of early care and education programs. The private sector has a vested interest in supporting the development of a competent and globally competitive workforce, which begins by ensuring the developmental needs of young children are met so they enter school healthy and ready to learn. A growing culture of corporate social responsibility is also persuading the private sector of the benefits of supporting their employees and the educational success of their children. Investing in early childhood development aligns with the broader philanthropic agenda to promote quality education and, in doing so, support children, families, and communities.

What Is an Early Childhood Partnership?

The goal of all early childhood partnerships is to leverage resources and expertise to increase the quality and availability of programs and services provided to children from birth to age five. Partnerships are not a new concept, though they are reemerging as an effective way to promote coordinated investments in early childhood. While partnerships can take many forms, those featured in this guide pool public, private, and/or philanthropic funds through a nonprofit state-level entity. Although private resources are not intended to supplant public investment in the healthy development and school readiness of young children, these resources can be used to spur action and seed innovation across the state. Public commitments range from \$1 million to more than \$200 million annually. Likewise, private and philanthropic investments range from \$2 million to more than \$30 million annually. Typically, most of the resources are allocated through community grants to pursue locally identified initiatives that align with the mission of the state-level partnership. Partnerships can also retain some funding at the state level to focus on statewide initiatives, such as building state and local early childhood systems infrastructure, promoting best practices, and/or supporting public awareness campaigns.

How Do Partnerships Support State School Readiness Goals?

States can pursue different paths to reach their school readiness goals based on their priorities. Through grants, training, and technical assistance, partnerships can focus on improving the quality or availability of early childhood programs by pursuing one or more of these objectives:

- Provide flexible funding for locally identified needs, such as improving early care education programs, increasing access to health services, or providing professional development opportunities for early childhood practitioners and leadership;
- Build the state and local infrastructure needed to coordinate an early childhood system across the state;
- Increase public awareness and outreach efforts to engage the public and educate parents on the importance of early childhood; and
- Promote best practices and bring promising models of high-quality programs to scale.

What Are the Necessary Steps to Create a Partnership?

Governors and state policymakers can take several steps to explore the viability of creating an early childhood public-private partnership in their state:

- Convene state, local, public, private, and philanthropic leaders to highlight the importance of early childhood investments and issue a call to action;
- Identify public, private, and philanthropic resources and expertise that could form the foundation of a partnership;
- Formalize state commitment through legislation or executive order and establish the partnership as a bipartisan nonprofit organization;
- Determine the partnership's state and local governance structure; and
- Consider ways to evaluate the effectiveness of the partnership's activities.

States can use partnerships in their toolkit of services and supports for children from birth to age five. This model of collaboration affords perspectives, resources, and expertise from multiple sectors to achieve positive outcomes for young children.







Why Do Public, Private, and Philanthropic Leaders Support Early Childhood Development?

A child's "school readiness," or the expectation of how children will fare upon entry into kindergarten, has increasingly drawn the attention of governors, business leaders, and philanthropists across the nation. The first years of life before school entry are a critical period of development and can have a tremendous impact on a child's ability to succeed in school. During the early years of life, the brain undergoes its most rapid growth as neural connections (synapses) are made at incredible rates. When young children are raised in healthy environments and nurturing relationships, neural connections are reinforced and solidified. Healthy brain development enables children to develop the cognitive, physical, language, social, and emotional skills that are fundamental to school success.³

Yet arriving at kindergarten healthy and ready to learn is a formidable challenge for young children who are exposed to high-stress environments because of poverty, abuse, neglect, or maternal depression; who lack stable and nurturing relationships; who suffer from poor nutrition; or who lack access to high-quality health care and early learning opportunities. In the worst-case scenario, children who are not able to recover from early gaps in learning and development face an increased likelihood of school failure, unemployment, and dependence on social welfare.⁴ Such failure poses significant public costs, as the demand for remedial education services, health and social services, and criminal justice services takes a toll on societal resources.⁵

Fortunately, the most vulnerable children stand to receive the greatest benefit from programs and services supporting their healthy development. The National Scientific Council on the Developing Child found that "for young children from low-income families, participation in very high-quality,⁶ center-based early education programs [has] been demonstrated to enhance child cognitive and social development."⁷ Participation in these programs has led to outcomes such as improvements in educational performance, higher earnings, and lower levels of criminal behaviors later in life.⁸

Moreover, the return for investing in high-quality early childhood programs and services is substantial. Using the outcomes of improvements in

The private sector has a vested interest in supporting the development of a competent and globally competitive workforce, which is most effectively fostered during the early years of development.

educational performance, higher earnings, and lower levels of criminal behaviors later in life, University of Chicago economist and Nobel Laureate James Heckman has calculated a cost-benefit ratio of approximately \$7 for every \$1 invested in high-quality early childhood experiences for at-risk children.⁹ Federal Reserve Bank of Minneapolis economists Rob Grunewald and Arthur Rolnick have calculated an impressive return for investing in such high-quality comprehensive programs for at-risk young children and their families. Such “investment in early childhood development programs brings a real (that is, inflation adjusted) public return of 12 percent and a real total return, public and private, of 16 percent. . . . [W]e are unaware of any other economic development effort that has such a public return.”¹⁰

The individual and societal benefits that result from early childhood programs and services have captured the attention of the public, private, and philanthropic sectors. Increasingly, these sectors are initiating support for early childhood activities in many states.

States recognize the contribution of quality early care and education experiences to school readiness. As of the 2005–2006 school year, 38 states increased spending for prekindergarten to \$3.3 billion to enable nearly 950,000 children to enroll in state-funded prekindergarten programs.¹¹ While increasing access to such programs, states also are working to improve program quality. Sixteen states that offer state-funded prekindergarten have raised program quality standards to benchmarks set by The National Institute for Early Education Research.¹² In addition, 15 states are piloting statewide quality rating systems.¹³ These systems assess, improve, and communicate the level of quality in early care and education programs to parents and the provider community.¹⁴ Numerous other states and communities are piloting similar programs. Twenty-two states have developed early learning guidelines for children from birth to age five.¹⁵ To improve the quality of care for infants and toddlers, at least 19 states have active infant-toddler specialist networks that provide support to center-based professionals and in-home caregivers.¹⁶

The private sector has a vested interest in supporting the development of a competent and globally competitive workforce, which is most effectively fostered during the early years of development. A recent report from The World Bank states, “the evidence is solid—economists, political scientists, neuroscientists, and social scientists have substantial data proving that programs which promote the growth and development of young children (ages 0–6 years) are the best investment for developing the human capital necessary for economic growth. Early child development:

- Is the foundation of human-capital formation;
- Has the highest rate of return in economic development; and
- Is the most cost-effective way to reduce poverty and to foster economic growth.”¹⁷

In 2004, The Business Roundtable, an association of chief executive officers of leading U.S. companies, and Corporate Voices for Working Families, a coalition of representatives from leading corporations, issued a call to action to the private sector that outlined the business case for supporting investments in early childhood. “The business community supports high-quality early childhood education programs because they lead to improved education results, a world-class work force, a healthier society, and ultimately a stronger economy.”¹⁸ Companies have responded with large investments in early childhood programs, such as Grow Up Great, a 10-year, \$100 million project of the PNC Bank Foundation that grants funds to nonprofit organizations to improve the school readiness of children from birth to age five.¹⁹

Moreover, supporting the healthy development of children from birth to age five aligns with the business sector’s growing interest in meeting corporate social responsibility goals to support their employees and the educational success of their children. While developing a competitive workforce is a long-term strategy for economic growth, in the short term “employers increasingly find that the availability of good early childhood programs is critical to the recruitment and retention of parent employees.”²⁰ For example, in 2001, the Boeing Company committed nearly \$500,000 to improve early childhood learning programs in **Washington** communities where the most company employees live and work.²¹ Boeing has since committed leadership and funding as a key partner of Thrive by Five, the state’s public-private partnership for school readiness.

Partnerships align with the philanthropic community’s broader agenda to promote quality education and, in doing so, support children, families, and communities. The Omaha, Nebraska-based Buffett Early Childhood Fund and the Ounce of Prevention Fund in **Illinois** work with partners in at least six communities nationwide to create state-of-the-art Educare centers to better prepare young children for success in school. The Educare approach blends philanthropic and public funding in a unique model of partnership. Philanthropic funds support the construction of Educare centers, and public funds cover program costs. Each Educare center provides seamless high-quality early care and education to 150 to 200 infants, toddlers, and preschoolers growing up in low-income families.²²

Philanthropic leaders in **Connecticut** conducted a scan of current investments, documenting more than \$75 million in private and philanthropic funds allocated to early childhood programs and services. Using the results, state, private, and philanthropic leaders developed a plan to align current investments to the priorities of the Connecticut Early Childhood Education Cabinet’s Early Childhood Investment Framework. A leading Connecticut philanthropy, the William Caspar Graustein Memorial Fund, proposed a public-private matching plan to the state cabinet, which subsequently voted to allocate \$1.25 million in new state funds to leverage \$800,000 in addi-

tional philanthropic investments during the current biennium. Funds will be used to support local capacity building and enhance the state's Parent Trust Fund, which provides funding to train parents in civic leadership. Connecticut's state and philanthropic leaders continue to explore avenues for further collaboration, which may include new formal structures for managing public and philanthropic resources.

Given the public, private, and philanthropic communities' interest in early childhood, these sectors recognize that coordinating their efforts through formal partnerships maximizes the impact on young children, prevents duplication of effort, and ensures the efficient use of resources. Many states have created early childhood public-private partnerships that bring together the resources, perspectives, and expertise of the public, private, and philanthropic sectors in order to inform state priorities to build public awareness of the importance of early childhood development and improve the quality and availability of early care and education programs.





What Is an Early Childhood Partnership?

Early childhood public-private partnerships aim to improve the quality and availability of programs and services provided to children from birth to age five. Although partnerships are not a new concept, they are reemerging as an effective strategy to maximize funding and achieve positive outcomes for young children. Details on the features, form, and functions of existing state models can guide governors and state policymakers interested in creating an early childhood partnership.

Structure

Existing state models of early childhood partnerships share some common features. Each pools public, private, and/or philanthropic funds through a nonprofit state-level entity. These partnerships bring together diverse state and local stakeholders, such as parents, legislators, service providers, state agency and business leaders, and members of the philanthropic community. Resources are typically allocated to communities throughout the state to support activities aligned with the partnership's vision. Partnerships can also retain some funding at the state level to focus on statewide initiatives, such as building state and local early childhood systems infrastructure, promoting best practices, and/or supporting public awareness campaigns. These collaborative bodies can be created to pursue a short-term endeavor or established to sustain programs and services for a long period.

Authority

Some states have enacted legislation to codify the creation of the public-private partnership, while others have enacted partnerships through executive order. Typically, partnerships are established as a new bipartisan 501(c)3 nonprofit organization or are housed within an existing nonprofit entity.



State and Local Governance

A state-level executive board determines the partnership's shared vision, goals, and outcomes. The number of governing board members ranges from 7 to 30. Members may include parents, state agencies, business and philanthropic leaders, child care providers, medical professionals, and representatives from the executive branch. Similarly, communities receiving funding usually are required to create a local advisory board or steering committee to oversee the implementation of activities and use of funds. These boards typically represent a cross-section of parents, early childhood and health professionals, local government agency personnel, and civic and business leaders.

Funding

Public commitments range from \$1 million to more than \$200 million annually. Private and philanthropic investments range from \$2 million to more than \$30 million annually. These resources cover the costs of staffing the partnership, funding the grants that are awarded to communities, and supporting any statewide activities. Not all public-private partnerships require large public and private capital investments, however. Partnerships can often generate in-kind resources and support, such as loaned staff and meeting space.

Community Grants and Technical Assistance

Under the models featured in this guide, most partnership funds are allocated to facilitate community activities that closely align with the partnership's mission. Almost all partnerships support community efforts to conduct a needs assessment so resources can be flexibly and strategically targeted. Communities generally respond to a request for proposals or submit an application for funding. In some states, the public-private partnership supports activities in every community or region. In other states, the resources support activities in a few demonstration communities or pilot sites and, in the long term, may seek to bring these models to scale. Depending on the purpose, grants can range from \$25,000 to \$500,000 annually, and most require a local match ranging from 10 percent to 50 percent of the grant amount. Resources are typically targeted for health, family support, and early care and education services for children from birth to age five. The state-level entity may also provide technical assistance, oversight, and monitoring of communities' progress toward desired outcomes.





How Do Partnerships Support State School Readiness Goals?

All partnerships leverage the resources, perspectives, and expertise of the public, private, and philanthropic sectors to increase the quality and availability of programs and services for children from birth to age five. In many states, parents face multiple challenges when trying to access high-quality care for their children. Eligibility requirements for state and federal programs are difficult to navigate and may change depending on the parents' income level. Families that live in remote areas simply may not have high-quality provider choices within a reasonable distance. Even when home- or center-based care options are available, it may be difficult for parents to find programs that provide the comprehensive services they and their children need. Or, these programs may not live up to the basic tenets of quality care, which include well-trained teachers, relatively low child-teacher ratios, and effective parent education and involvement.

The private and philanthropic sectors can partner with states to support the school readiness of children from birth to age five and achieve one or more of these objectives:

- Provide flexible funding for locally identified needs, such as improving early care and education programs, increasing access to health services, or providing professional development opportunities for early childhood practitioners and leadership;
- Build the state and local infrastructure needed to coordinate an early childhood system across the state;
- Increase public awareness and outreach efforts to engage the public and educate parents on the importance of early childhood; and
- Promote best practices and bring promising models of high-quality programs to scale.

Provide Flexible Funding for Locally Identified Needs

Many state-level partnerships support communities by providing flexible funding to pursue activities that improve programs and services for young children and their families. Partnerships typically support community efforts to conduct a needs assessment to identify funding priorities.

North Carolina's Smart Start initiative strengthens service delivery by supporting early childhood systems at the local level. For the past 15 years, the state's public-private partnership, the North Carolina Partnership for Children (NCPC), has granted funds to local partnerships throughout the state. In addition, NCPC oversees and provides technical assistance to local partnerships. Based on locally conducted needs assessments, communities use the funds to strengthen the quality of early education, increase affordability and access, provide health-related services, and engage and support parents through a variety of programs including parent education classes.

In January 2004, **Arizona** Governor Janet Napolitano unveiled her School Readiness Action Plan, a five-year initiative to create a statewide early childhood system. Drawing on the expertise of public and private stakeholders, the state partnered with the Arizona Community Foundation, the Tucson Community Foundation, and the United Way of Tucson and Southern Arizona to establish the Arizona Early Education Funds (AEEF). AEEF's resources are devoted to funding projects that promote high-quality early childhood services, such as the creation of school readiness regional partnerships in Arizona's 15 counties and the professional development leadership program CHASE Early Education Emergent Leaders. In November 2006, voters passed Proposition 203, or First Things First for Arizona's Children. The ballot initiative authorizes the use of revenue from a new tobacco tax to generate an estimated \$150 million in new funds for high-quality early childhood development and health programs. These funds will be disseminated statewide through a network of regional councils, which will build on relationships initiated and lessons learned during the AEEF regional partnership process. The dedicated public funding available through First Things First will sustain the work at the local level that was initiated through private funding. Many AEEF partnerships will choose to continue operations in partnership with their local First Things First council.

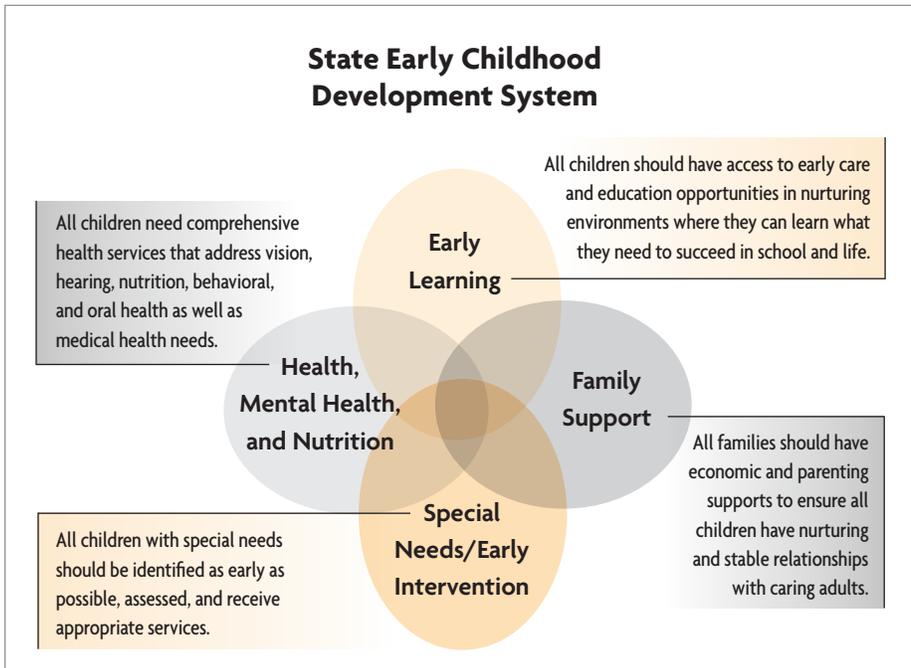
In April 2006, **Nebraska** Governor Dave Heineman signed legislation to create a Birth to Three Early Childhood Education Endowment for at-risk children, with a commitment of \$40 million in public funds matched by \$20 million from private philanthropic sources. In November 2006, voters approved a constitutional amendment to permanently establish public funding for the endowment through the use of Educational Land Trust Funds. A board of trustees administers the endowment's grant allocation process. As prescribed in legislation, all board members are appointed by the governor and include the Commissioner of Education, Director of Health and Human Services, two early childhood professionals from rural and urban areas, and two persons recommended by the endowment provider to represent the private investors in the endowment. The endowment's competitive grants are awarded to school districts to partner with local agencies or programs in their communities for birth-to-three services for at-risk children. Grants require a match of at least 50 percent of total program costs.²³

Governor Mark Sanford has been a champion of First Steps to School Readiness, **South Carolina's** public-private partnership for early childhood that aims to ensure young children are ready for school. The partnership leverages resources to increase the quality and availability of early care and learning programs throughout the state. It promotes the importance of nutrition and health care in securing the long-term academic success and well-being of young children. Moreover, First Steps supports parents and families in their efforts to develop school readiness and child well-being, helping to ensure school entry is a smooth and beneficial transition for the state's youngest learners. To help ensure these services are delivered effectively, South Carolina established First Steps partnerships in every county. These local-level partnerships identify specific community needs and foster collaboration among service providers to fill programmatic gaps. By tailoring its efforts to specific community needs, First Steps increases school readiness outcomes for all children.

For several decades, **Oklahoma's** public and private leaders have championed early childhood education through partnerships. These champions, both in the private work of early childhood and the public, have become nationally recognized experts who have successfully advocated for and implemented a model public-private partnership the state legislature has now adopted as the Early Childhood Pilot Project for birth to four-year-olds. During the 2006 legislative session, Oklahoma appropriated funds to the state education department for a new public-private early childhood pilot program for infants and toddlers. The state committed up to \$5 million in funding in the first year to match \$10 million from private and philanthropic sources. In 2007, the state appropriated \$10 million, with a \$15 million private-sector match. The Oklahoma Department of Education, which oversees implementation of the state's universal prekindergarten program through local school districts, contracted with the Community Action Project of Tulsa County to roll out the infant-toddler pilot program statewide. Smart Start Oklahoma, a 29-member nonprofit partnership organization, is providing project coordination and technical assistance. The pilot model allows for nationally accredited providers to expand their slots for infants and children up to age four for low-income families, with state money earmarked for operating expenses and private funding directed to capital costs. In the first year of operation, 1,200 slots were added or enhanced, 150 classrooms were added, and 15 community providers were working in 20 communities statewide.

Build State and Local Infrastructure

Under the 2002–2003 chairmanship of former Governor Paul E. Patton of **Kentucky**, the National Governors Association established a gubernatorial Task Force on School Readiness to identify actions that governors and states can take to support families, schools, and communities in their efforts to ensure all children are ready for school. Recommendations from the final report, *Building the Foundation for Bright Futures*, encourage states to ensure young children



Source: Early Childhood Systems Working Group, 2006.

and their parents have access to a comprehensive early childhood development system of programs and services to support their needs. This “system of interrelated systems” would coordinate the state’s early learning programs; services for parents of young children; health, mental health, and nutrition programs; and early intervention services to aid young children with special needs (see figure on State Early Childhood Development System).²⁴

Although many states are working to create a synchronized early childhood system, coordination is no easy task. Programs and services within and among

the interrelated systems are often administered by different state agencies, and most states lack the infrastructure needed at the state or local level to coordinate programs or services across these systems. In many states, “systems” of early childhood are not interrelated as depicted in the figure but exist as a nonsystem of stand-alone and uncoordinated programs and services. Efforts to create a seamless delivery system are further complicated by the myriad federal and state funding streams that support different programs and services for young children and their families. Without the infrastructure to support coordination, services are often duplicated and funding cannot be maximized. As a result, states struggle to provide a comprehensive and seamless system of care for families and young children.

Coordinating these systems of supports—both at the state level and within the communities that administer the supports—requires resources that are not typically available in state and community program operating budgets. Without a coordinating infrastructure, or the resources to support local efforts to build the capacity for high-quality services, communities struggle to make do by accessing the patchwork of available programs and services.

Partnerships help establish, support, or expand on the existing early childhood system infrastructure. To achieve this goal, resources are allocated to fund oversight, administrative support, collaboration, and technical assistance to local entities. Whether or not the partnership is established as a formal governance structure, the process of allocating resources creates a channel of communication among the state-level stakeholders, from the state entity to the local partnerships and within and among the local partnerships.



For example, the goal of **Michigan** Governor Jennifer Granholm’s Great Start initiative is to coordinate early childhood services provided across the state. In the short term, the initiative aims to improve the quality of early childhood initiatives. In the long term, stakeholders are working together to create a cohesive statewide early childhood system for children from birth to age five. A key component of Great Start is Michigan’s public-private partnership, the Early Childhood Investment Corporation (ECIC). ECIC uses public and private dollars to promote early childhood infrastructure development at the local level, and it then coordinates the resulting efforts statewide. To help communities provide universal, high-quality early childhood experiences, ECIC offers grants to build community-based capacity and launch local decision-making entities called Great Start collaboratives. In addition to providing financial support for early childhood through in-

creased public and private investment, ECIC is carefully reviewing current state-wide investment for the purposes of accountability and reform. Finally, ECIC serves as a hub of best practices for parents, service providers, and community leaders.

In 2006, Governor Tim Kaine of **Virginia** launched Smart Beginnings, an initiative that promotes investments in early childhood development. This effort provides a comprehensive context and complement to the governor's Start Strong plan to increase four-year-olds' access to high-quality preschool. The Virginia Early Childhood Foundation is the nonprofit host of Smart Beginnings that integrates public and private funding streams and offers systems-building grants to local coalitions. Communities use these grants to improve existing programs, coordinate early childhood services, and track programmatic outcomes. The foundation also builds public awareness of the importance of early childhood development through its Smart Beginnings Web site, which functions as a public outreach tool.

With state funding support from **Alaska** Governor Sarah Palin's fiscal 2008 budget, Best Beginnings: Alaska's Early Childhood Investment (formerly Ready to Read, Ready to Learn) brings the resources and perspectives of the private and public sectors together through the collaborative efforts of foundations, state representatives, business leaders, the Alaska Native community, nonprofit organizations, and the faith-based community. Best Beginnings is working to ensure the recommendations of the Ready to Read, Ready to Learn Task Force are implemented. Those recommendations include promoting the development of a statewide system of voluntary and affordable early childhood education with in-home and out-of-home options for children and families in all communities.

Increase Public Awareness and Outreach to Parents

Building public awareness and support for early childhood development is often a primary goal and function of public-private partnerships. As partnerships launch public awareness campaigns and monitor and report the progress of their investments, they become effective mechanisms for cultivating new early childhood champions. In many states, new champions at the state and local levels have been integral to the success of a partnership's ability to sustain progress over time.

In **Washington**, Thrive by Five coordinates a statewide campaign affiliated with the national Born Learning Campaign of the United Way. Born Learning Washington consists of 10 locally led campaigns and a statewide effort of more than 25 statewide organization partners. The Washington Department of Early Learning provides matching grants to six community campaigns spanning 20 counties. The campaign includes airing radio and cable television public service announcements, contributing news stories and editorials to major local papers, and distributing Born Learning and partner organizations' materials in English and Spanish.

The Smart Beginnings Blitz in **Virginia** was a series of events held across the state between Mother's Day and Father's Day highlighting the importance of early childhood development for parents and families. Activities were organized by local libraries, local departments of health and social services, child care resource and referral offices, and other agencies and organizations serving children and families.

Promote Best Practices

State-level partnerships can offer opportunities for local partnerships and regional partnerships to collaborate and share best practices with each other.

Partnerships like **Michigan's** Early Childhood Investment Corporation provide technical assistance and opportunities for all local partnerships to participate in discussion forums and trainings. This model promotes best practices across the state and enables the state-level partnership to communicate with local entities on relevant policy issues. The regularity of communication helps develop the infrastructure needed for a cohesive statewide early childhood system.

To bring to scale best practices for high-quality early care and education, **Washington's** Thrive by Five identified two communities to serve as models of comprehensive early learning systems. These communities effectively synchronize high-quality early learning opportunities, home-based support services, and parent education and local awareness programs. In addition, each community hosts a model child care center that serves as a local hub for parent support and offers professional development opportunities to other service providers. Thrive by Five also offers promising practices grants that support effective and innovative early learning programs statewide. For example, through a Reading Readiness initiative, Thrive by Five and the state Department of Early Learning are jointly funding community-based initiatives that promote emergent literacy and early reading skills among children from birth to age five. Selected grantee plans include parent and community involvement, public awareness efforts, and the coordination of resources and partnerships with local school districts.

To promote best practices across the nation, the **North Carolina** Smart Start National Technical Assistance Center (NTAC) supports collaboration and coordination among the public, private, and philanthropic sectors within other states. NTAC resources, including grants, meetings, consultations, guest speakers, site visits, and assessment and planning tools, to help other states and communities create successful early childhood systems. NTAC also hosts an annual national conference that focuses on how to develop comprehensive early childhood programs and systems. Attendees include representatives of local Smart Start partnerships from state and local governments, and national early childhood organizations and nonprofit organizations.





What Are the Necessary Steps to Create a Partnership?

Governors are in a unique position to champion the creation of public-private partnerships and bring together stakeholders with diverse resources, perspectives, and expertise. Governors and state policymakers interested in establishing a formal partnership will need to take the following steps:

- Convene state, local, public, private, and philanthropic leaders to highlight the importance of early childhood investments and issue a call to action;
- Identify public, private, and philanthropic resources and expertise that could form the foundation of a partnership;
- Formalize state commitment through legislation or an executive order and establish the partnership as a bipartisan nonprofit organization;
- Determine the partnership's state and local governance structure; and
- Consider ways to evaluate the effectiveness of the partnership's activities.

Convene State, Local, Public, Private, and Philanthropic Leaders

Governors are powerful champions for engaging the diverse group of public and private stakeholders needed for successful partnerships. As a first step, a governor can convene legislators, local authorities, and leaders from the business and philanthropic communities to increase awareness of the importance of early childhood programs and services and issue a call to action. Governors also can commission a task force to review existing governance structures and current public and private investments in early childhood. The results can inform discussions about the possible role, structure, and political viability of a formal partnership entity.

In January 2007, **Arizona** Governor Janet Napolitano hosted a state-wide Early Childhood Summit to celebrate the successful passage of the First Things First for Arizona's Children ballot initiative that established a public funding stream for early childhood and make connections between the existing regional partnerships and the newly appointed members of the Early Childhood Development and Health Board. The summit included state and community leaders, as well as philanthropic and private-sector leaders, and provided a venue to explore how the new public funding source would coordinate with existing private and philanthropic funds.

In **Washington**, Governor Christine Gregoire appointed an Early Learning Advisory Council. This body is the permanent successor to the temporary Early Learning Council—also appointed by the governor—which was charged with developing initial recommendations for early learning that included the creation of a cabinet-level Department of Early Learning as a top priority. The governor acted immediately to work with the legislature, which provided bipartisan support for the department’s creation. The permanent Early Learning Advisory Council is required to advise the department on statewide early learning community needs and progress. It also is responsible for creating a statewide early learning plan that crosses systems and sectors to promote alignment of private and public sector actions, objectives, and resources and to ensure school readiness. Governor Gregoire also has supported strong connections between the new department and a public-private partnership developed at the same time to build momentum. In addition, Governor Gregoire serves as the co-chair of that partnership, known as Thrive by Five Washington, alongside Bill Gates Sr. of the Bill & Melinda Gates Foundation.

Identify Public, Private, and Philanthropic Resources and Expertise

Governors and state policymakers can assess private- and philanthropic-sector investments in early childhood to identify prospective funding partners and gauge interest in a formal partnership. **Connecticut** Governor M. Jodi Rell issued an executive order establishing the Connecticut Early Childhood Research and Policy Council to help implement the state’s Early Childhood Investment Plan, and named a leading philanthropist (along with a leader in business and a leader in higher education) to co-chair the council. Council members representing the philanthropic community reviewed private-sector investments and developed recommendations to align them with the state’s investment priorities. These activities spurred new efforts to partner and leverage philanthropic- and public-sector funding.

Governors also can identify opportunities to leverage the state’s federal dollars with private and philanthropic funding. In 2005, **Michigan** committed approximately \$15 million in federal Child Care Bureau block grant funding to the Early Childhood Investment Corporation to support local investments. The ECIC was also designed as the fiduciary for a federal Early Childhood Comprehensive Systems grant, which is offered to all states by the Maternal and Child Health Bureau. Strategic use of \$1 million from the state’s School Aid Fund enabled the ECIC to leverage \$6.5 million in private funding from the Kellogg Foundation. The Joyce Foundation also funded state efforts to build public support for early childhood issues.

Formalize State Commitment and Establish a Partnership Organization

Governors play a key role in ensuring the public sector is fully represented in a public-private partnership. When partnerships are ready to be formalized, governors can establish partnerships through an executive order (**Connecticut**); appoint cabinet-level, public-sector leaders to serve on the board (**North Carolina**); or even chair or co-chair the board themselves (**South Carolina** and **Washington**). Governors also can support public investment in such partnerships by including funding in the operating budget (Alaska) and/or supporting specific legislation to appropriate funds (**Oklahoma**).

To ensure long-term sustainability and maintain a consistent bipartisan focus, most public-private partnerships are established in the public sector as 501(c)3 charitable organizations. However, some states establish their partnership within an existing public-private nonprofit organization. Non-profit status enables partnerships to accept public and private funding and obtain tax-exempt status, and it protects the partnership's members and directors from personal liability.

South Carolina, Virginia, and Washington established a new, autonomous nonprofit organization to house their partnership. **Michigan's** Early Childhood Investment Corporation is a public, nonprofit corporation housed independent of state government and operates simultaneously in the public and private sectors. In **Nebraska**, the state board of education selected the Nebraska Children and Families Foundation as the private administrator of the Nebraska Early Childhood Education Endowment through a competitive proposal process. **Alaska's** Best Beginnings is co-managed by two existing nonprofit agencies, the Alaska Humanities Forum and United Way of Anchorage.

Determine the Partnership's Governance Structure

In most states, an executive board is required to attain nonprofit status, but it is also created to determine the partnership's shared vision and goals. The size of the governing board typically ranges from 7 to 30, with members representing parents, state agencies, businesses and philanthropies, child care providers, the medical community, and the executive office.

Establishing an executive governing body with diverse stakeholders at the helm ensures the entity can withstand changes in political leadership and maintain a consistent, bipartisan focus. **Michigan's** Early Childhood Investment Corporation has an independent board of directors that is governed by a 15-member executive committee appointed by the governor. Board members represent parents; state and local government; the nonprofit sector; and business, civic, faith, and community groups. In **South Carolina**, the governor, president pro tempore of the senate, and speaker of the house of representatives together appoint 20 voting members, drawn from the business,

medical, education, and child care sectors. These voting members are joined by 11 nonvoting members representing all state agencies that provide services to young children and their families. **Nebraska's** Early Childhood Education Endowment has a board of trustees that includes the commissioner of education, the director of health and human services, and four governor-appointed members from the nonprofit and provider communities.

Consider Ways to Evaluate Partnership Activities

Measuring the impact of public-private partnerships is essential to ensure accountability and long-term sustainability. Evaluation is critical not only to satisfy accountability requirements, but also to communicate the value of investments and foster a culture of continuous improvement. Good evaluation systems set clear expectations about an initiative's intended outcomes and what is to be measured. They also incorporate multiple evaluation approaches (e.g., implementation studies, indicator tracking, and impact studies) and build capacity within communities to measure progress. With this goal in mind, an important role of partnerships is to provide guidance and technical assistance to communities on how to establish, track, and report outcomes. Developing an ongoing communications strategy to share outcomes and lessons learned with critical audiences such as legislators, funders, communities, and parents keeps momentum behind the initiative and ensures continued support.

In **South Carolina**, legislation requires First Steps to contract with an outside evaluator to measure its effectiveness every three years. The first evaluation, conducted in 2003, focused on implementation and addressed whether First Steps was doing "the right things, in the right ways, for the right people."²⁵ The second evaluation in 2006 shifted the focus to outcomes and whether First Steps is "getting the right results." The evaluation showed that First Steps successfully targeted resources to the neediest and poorest children. Among the children who participated in programs supported by First Steps, the study found an improvement in the cognitive abilities of those served in state-funded four-year old kindergarten and a demonstrated improvement in the quality of child care programs supported by First Steps.²⁶ Positive findings cultivated strong support among critical stakeholders. A bipartisan group of 25 senators and 79 representatives co-sponsored legislation to reauthorize First Steps until 2013, which the state legislature passed unanimously. Governor Mark Sanford signed the reauthorization bill in March 2006, appearing alongside First Steps' original authorizer, former Governor Jim Hodges.

While still in the early implementation stages, the partnerships in **Michigan** and **Virginia** are mindful of the need to measure progress and capture and communicate results from the investments in local communities. The **Michigan** Early Childhood Investment Corporation is responsible for



evaluating the local and statewide systems on the basis of expected outcomes. ECIC's role is to define expectations, define and monitor performance standards, and establish baseline data for local Great Start communities. The ECIC is also charged with tracking economic outcome data and compiling and sharing state and local system evaluation data. In exchange for funding, local Great Start communities must identify and report on performance measures for community assessment and planning. The **Virginia** Early Childhood Foundation (VECF) is quickly assuming its role to provide technical assistance to community grantees on evaluation methods and requirements. VECF hosts evaluation workshops where communities can develop a common understanding and approach to measuring progress so collective lessons and progress toward intended outcomes can be identified, despite high degrees of variation in each grantee's goals and activities.

CONCLUSION

Supporting the readiness of young children at risk for school failure is critical to the nation's future. Although private resources are not intended to supplant public investment in the healthy development and school readiness of young children, they can be used to spur action and seed innovation across the state. Partnerships can support a cohesive early childhood system at the state and local levels, improve the quality and availability of programs and services, and cultivate a new cadre of champions to support early childhood initiatives. Governors can draw on other states' experiences and lessons learned to inform their leadership and design of a partnership that would best serve their state's needs. Public-private partnerships are not a silver bullet, but they are an important strategy for building a strong foundation of services and supports for young children to help ensure their healthy development and school readiness.

APPENDIX

**PROFILES OF STATE EARLY CHILDHOOD
PUBLIC-PRIVATE PARTNERSHIPS**





Best Beginnings:
Alaska's Early Childhood Investment Partnership
www.bestbeginningsalaska.org

Background

Nearly half of Alaska children enter school unprepared to succeed, particularly in early literacy. Representatives from different foundations, nonprofit organizations, and other sectors were concerned and wanted to take action. In May 2005, Alaska leaders gathered for a two-day summit on early literacy and learning. Based on the work at this summit, 27 Alaskan business, civic, philanthropic, education, and government leaders formed the Ready to Read, Ready to Learn Task Force. After gathering input from Alaskan and national experts in early childhood literacy and learning, the task force released its recommendations in September 2006. The report identifies a role for nearly every member of the community, including parents and other family members, caregivers, educators, businesses, nonprofit groups, foundations, faith-based organizations, and government entities.

The partnership Best Beginnings: Alaska's Early Childhood Investment was created in 2006 from a recommendation of the Ready to Read, Ready to Learn Task Force. The public-private partnership promotes the development of a statewide system of voluntary and affordable early childhood education with options for children and families in all communities.

Governance

Implementation of the Ready to Read, Ready to Learn Task Force recommendations is overseen by an executive board, the Early Learning Council, and others who are committed and passionate about ensuring Alaska children are prepared for the demands of kindergarten and beyond. Best Beginnings completed a three-year implementation plan to ensure the task force recommendations become a reality.

Best Beginnings is managed by the state's Early Learning Council and an existing nonprofit agency, United Way of Anchorage. Currently United Way of Anchorage serves as the fiscal agent for Best Beginnings. The partnership has not been established as a new nonprofit organization.

Funding

The partnership has received major contributions from BP and ConocoPhillips, grants from the Alaska Departments of Health and Social Services and Education and Early Development, and funding or in-kind services from the CIRI Foundation; the Rasmuson Foundation; Shell Oil; the First Alaskans Institute; Child Care Connection, Inc.; Alaska Public Telecommunications, Inc.; the University of Alaska; the Alaska Association for the Education of Young Children; Information Insights; United Way of Anchorage; Alaska Head Start Association; the Alaska Children's Trust; Alaska Community Action Program, Inc.; Smart Start's National Technical Assistance Center; and the Alaska Humanities Forum. Fundraising efforts are ongoing.

Programming

The partnership focuses on increasing access to early learning opportunities at the local level, particularly for at-risk families. In collaboration with Best Beginnings, the governor's office held a Governor's Summit on Early Learning in 2007. The goals of the summit were to develop recommendations to:

- Improve access to early literacy and learning opportunities for children most in need of such services, whether offered in the home or in other settings;
- Improve the coordination of these services; and
- Increase the engagement of parents, grandparents, and extended family in young children's learning by providing support, resources, and incentives.

With a grant from the Alaska Department of Health and Social Services, Best Beginnings developed a quality rating and improvement system for the state. The grant deliverables include recommendations about cost and phased-in implementation. As in other states, the mid- to higher-level ratings will indicate a program is likely to provide appropriate, quality learning environments and opportunities.

In partnership with the Alaska Departments of Education and Early Learning and Health and Social Services, Best Beginnings is ensuring the state's early learning guidelines (ELGs) are distributed to parents, educators, child care providers, and others in formats they can use in English and other languages. The ELGs will spell out what children should know, understand, and be able to do and provide solid underpinnings for all work with children from birth to age five. Best Beginnings received a multi-year grant from the Alaska Children's Trust to develop versions of the family-focused materials in languages other than English.

Best Beginnings is spearheading the Alaska Native Head Start Literacy Project, based on the PBS children's program "Between the Lions," and working with partners such as television station WGBH Boston, the CIRI Foundation, BP, the Rural Alaska Community Action Program, Southcentral Foundation Head Start, Alaska State Library, the Northwest Regional Educational Laboratory, the Institute of Social and Economic Research (University of Alaska), and the Alaska Head Start Collaboration Office. This pilot project is now in the planning phase, with outcomes for

children anticipated to mirror those achieved in 11 tribal Head Start programs in New Mexico. A study of Head Start programs in New Mexico found that as a result of participation, the number of children at risk for reading failure decreased from 39 percent to 12 percent and the number of children scoring above average increased from 23 percent to 64 percent.²⁷

Best Beginnings has also launched a public engagement campaign. Public service announcements are airing in Anchorage and in other parts of the state on television and the Alaska Public Radio Network. In 2007, Best Beginnings launched a Web site, with content for parents, educators, policymakers, and community members. The site also includes links to other information on early literacy and learning. Other activities are planned and will roll out in the next several months.

Evaluation

Work is underway on an evaluation plan.

Next Steps

Alaska plans to continue its work in early childhood. In collaboration with Best Beginnings, the state expects to prioritize the recommendations from the Governor's Summit on Early Learning and to work on an implementation plan. In addition, work continues on the development of Alaska's early learning system, incorporating both in-home and away-from-home opportunities for children.

A horizontal banner with an orange background. On the left, the word "ARIZONA" is written in white, uppercase letters. To its right is a white outline of the state of Arizona. Further right, the letters "E E F" are written in a large, white, serif font, with the "E" and "F" being significantly larger than the second "E".

ARIZONA

Arizona Early Education Funds
www.arizonaearlyeducationfunds.org

Background

The initiative known as Arizona Early Education Funds (AEEF) is committed to ensuring all children in Arizona start first grade safe, healthy, and ready to succeed. AEEF was created in January 2004 as part of the Governor's School Readiness Action Plan to build the capacity of local communities to provide quality early childhood education.²⁸ The funds were established at the Arizona Community Foundation in partnership with the Community Foundation for Southern Arizona and the United Way of Tucson and Southern Arizona.

Governance

Arizona Early Education Funds are donor-advised funds administered through the Arizona Community Foundation, a statewide 501(c)3 with four regional offices dedicated to connecting its donors' interests with community needs.²⁹ AEEF has a 23-member advisory board and a 6-member executive committee representing a wide cross-section of private and public entities.

Funding

Arizona Early Education Funds are partially endowed and are partially spendable. To date, AEEF has raised more than \$4 million in private philanthropic donations.

Activities

AEEF has focused primarily on developing a network of regional partnerships across the state, with funding for community assessment, capacity building, evaluation, leadership development, and technical assistance. The first AEEF request for partnership (RFP) was released and funded in 2006. To assist applicants through this process, the Arizona School Readiness Board hosted five learning summits throughout the state to talk about the board's action plan

and the RFP. Only partnerships represented at a summit were eligible to apply.

Communities seeking funding were required to create a local advisory board or steering committee to oversee the implementation of activities and use of funds. These boards typically represent a cross-section of the early care and education and health communities; local government, civic, and business leaders; and parents. Funding priority was granted to communities that included a diversity of representation. The application process brought forth an extensive array of partners, with representation from groups and individuals such as behavioral health providers, community action programs, early childhood educators, the faith community, grandparents, job training agencies, the media, and public school administrators.³⁰

The first regional grant awards funded the establishment of regional partnerships in six Arizona counties. Grants ranged from \$25,000 to \$100,000. Besides the grant funds to the counties, AEEF committed \$200,000 in funds to provide technical assistance to the regional partnerships to help ensure their success as they develop. Communities with lower grant allocations received correspondingly greater amounts of technical assistance.³¹

In addition to the six original partnerships funded through AEEF, an additional two partnerships were subsequently funded directly by the Phelps Dodge Corporation. This brought the number of funded partnerships in the state to eight.

As a result of a generous gift from the Ellis Center for Education Excellence in late 2006, AEEF was able to release another RFP to the unfunded partnerships in the state to fund their development and, therefore, ensure partnerships in some stage of development in each of Arizona's 15 counties.

In addition to its work with these regional partnerships, another signature effort of the Arizona Early Education Funds is the CHASE Early Education Emergent Leaders program. This successful professional development pro-

gram helps early childhood practitioners enhance their management and leadership skills, increases their opportunities to engage in leadership and professional development opportunities, and provides a forum for collaboration and networking. The program is made possible through a generous gift from CHASE Bank. The program builds the leadership, management, and advocacy skills of those working in the field of early childhood education. The class of 2008 is unique because, for the first time, it is made up entirely of child care center directors representing private, nonprofit, faith-based, and Head Start programs. By investing in individuals in leadership positions who help set the culture for an entire program, the CHASE Early Education Emergent Leaders program is able to maximize its impact on teachers and children.

Evaluation

During the development of school readiness regional partnerships, technical assistance consultants and partnership members continually assessed the progress of their developing and expanding partnerships. An online survey conducted during the early stages of development sought to determine how individuals felt about the quality of the regional information meetings, AEEF's request for partners process, and the initial technical assistance provided to them. After six months, partnerships were surveyed by telephone to learn about what was working and what could be changed in the delivery of technical assistance, both with regard to the technical assistance consultants and the statewide technical assistance meetings).

In early 2007, AEEF hired a special program consultant to provide research and evaluation for the funded programs. A comprehensive evaluation of AEEF's technical assistance for the regional partnerships, *Uniting on Common Ground*, was published in December 2007. The report explores the qualities of the AEEF technical assistance consultants, the partnerships' experience with the technical assistance, and opportunities for growth.

Next Steps

In November 2006, Arizona voters passed Proposition 203 or First Things First for Arizona's Children, a ballot initiative that will help ensure all children arrive at school to succeed. The estimated \$150 million raised annually through a new tobacco tax will augment existing programs and services for young children in Arizona by funding early childhood

health and education programs with a focus on improving quality and increasing access to high-quality programs. These funds will be used to increase the quality and availability of early childhood programs through regional grants tailored to the specific needs and characteristics of the communities the region serves, with a focus on demonstrating improved outcomes. At least 90 percent of the money collected will be earmarked for programs and services that benefit young children directly, primarily through grants to regional councils but also through selected statewide initiatives. The funds will be distributed through a new statewide board, the Early Childhood Development and Health Board; the board aligns with the state board of education, which oversees K-12 education, and the board of regents, which oversees the state's universities.

The regional council network that will be funded by First Things First is building on relationships initiated and lessons learned during the AEEF regional partnership process, including the findings in the technical assistance evaluation report *Uniting on Common Ground*. The dedicated public funding available through First Things First will sustain the work at the local level that was initiated through private funding. Because the requirements of the First Things First councils are somewhat different from those of the AEEF regional partnerships, it will not be possible for most of the partnerships to morph seamlessly into the First Things First councils, but many individuals who serve on the partnerships are applying to serve on the councils. Many AEEF partnerships will also choose to continue operations in partnership with their local First Things First council.

Once the funding through First Things First is flowing to the regions, it is anticipated AEEF will no longer fund regional partnerships, at least not at this current level, and will turn to other priorities such as exploring new models and innovations. The Arizona Early Education Funds advisory board will soon determine the scope of future grant-making activities as it assesses the gaps that are not addressed through First Things First or other state or private funding. The board is discussing whether to move to a membership model where fewer donors would make substantial, multiyear commitments. The advisory board will also work with First Things First to articulate AEEF's role in coordinating philanthropic activities in Arizona around early childhood education efforts.

CONNECTICUT



To read more about Connecticut's cabinet and council structures, visit www.ecpolicycouncil.org

Background

In 2005, Connecticut Governor M. Jodi Rell championed legislation creating an Early Childhood Education Cabinet that was charged with developing a multiyear early childhood investment plan. In 2006, the cabinet released "Ready by Five, Fine by Nine: Connecticut's Early Childhood Investment Framework," which prioritized 50 action items into these top 10 investment priorities for Connecticut.

Quality Preschool

- Ensure fiscal support for high-quality preschool for all three- and four-year-olds in families with incomes at or below 185 percent of the federal poverty level and increase this income eligibility standard as state resources permit.
- Address state reimbursement inequities for state-funded, center-based preschool programs.
- Develop a multiyear early childhood workforce professional development plan to ensure compliance with state law and selected national certification programs.
- Provide health, mental health, and education consultation to preschool programs to enhance the skills of directors and teachers in meeting the comprehensive needs of children.

Developmental Success

- Develop a comprehensive strategic plan for serving infants and toddlers.
- Expand eligibility categories in the birth-to-three program to include mild developmental delays and environmental risks.

- Ensure Healthcare for Uninsured Kids and Youth (HUSKY) children receive regular well-child visits and an annual developmental assessment.
- Provide all families and caregivers, including noncustodial parents, with information on child development (prenatal through age eight).

Early Elementary

- Support the design and implementation of the kindergarten assessment.

Local Councils

- Support local communities in developing birth-to-five councils for planning and monitoring early childhood services.

In February 2006, Governor Rell issued an executive order to create the Governor's Early Childhood Research and Policy Council, a 31-member panel led by public and private leaders. The council specifically includes representatives from the business, philanthropic, workforce, and economic development sectors; local government leadership; and K–20 educational leadership. It is co-chaired by a leading businessman, a philanthropist, and the commissioner of higher education. The Connecticut Economic Resource Center staffs the council, completing the connection between the child development and economic development sectors.

The council was charged with cost-modeling the 10 investment priorities of the state cabinet's investment framework. In just 82 days, the council prepared a five-year, fully transparent Early Childhood Investment Plan that continues to provide guidance to both the executive and legislative branches of government. Currently, the council is "rebasin" the investment plan to take into account progress in implementing preschool expansion efforts.

Activities

Connecticut's early childhood initiative advances the use of public-private partnerships to co-invest in community planning and strengthen public accountability for results.

Co-Investing in Community Planning. Early in state fiscal year 2007–08, the Connecticut Early Childhood Education Cabinet accepted an invitation from the William Caspar Graustein Memorial Fund to co-invest in helping Connecticut communities improve and expand their capacity for strategic planning around the needs of their young children and to promote parent leadership learning. A two-year investment of state funds totaling \$1.25 million was leveraged by \$800,000 in private philanthropy to help communities develop birth-to-nine local strategic plans anchored in a results-based accountability framework and to expand their parent leadership development efforts.

More important than the money was the creation of a formal public-private memorandum of agreement, a joint request for proposals, and a collaborative screening and award process. To manage this new public-private partnership, the Cabinet, Graustein Memorial Fund, and state education department created a three-person collaborative management team. To provide for local technical assistance and ongoing assessment of the initiative, the Graustein Memorial Fund contracted for national technical assistance from the Washington, D.C.-based Center for

the Study of Social Policy and funded a project manager position. The goal of this work is to help communities develop comprehensive local strategic plans that identify the needs of their children and families, use data to anchor fiscal requests, and begin to apply a results-based accountability framework at the local level. As of April 2008, 26 communities were awarded strategic planning funds for the state fiscal years 2007 and 2008, and parent leadership programs were funded across the state

Strengthen Public Accountability for Results. The executive order creating the Early Childhood Research and Policy Council also established the council's responsibility to monitor implementation of the investment plan. The council will conduct an interim accountability study of the cabinet's efforts to address the 10 investment priorities during its first 30 months of operation as a coordinating and collaborative management organization. The diverse perspectives of the council's public-private membership will be a unique asset, informing the cabinet's efforts to increase both its efficiency and effectiveness.

Next Steps

Connecticut's state and private-sector leaders continue to explore avenues for further collaboration. These may include new formal structures for managing public-private resources.





The Early Childhood Investment Corporation
www.ecic4kids.org

Background³²

Governor Jennifer Granholm's Great Start initiative was announced in her 2003 State-of-the-State speech.³³ The purpose of the initiative is to ensure all children enter kindergarten eager and ready for school success. The Department of Human Services and an intermediate school district (ISD) established the Early Childhood Investment Corporation (ECIC) in February 2005 as a separate legal entity through an interlocal agreement authorized under MCL 124.501–124.512. The ECIC has four main goals: promoting knowledge development through early childhood research, conducting public education and building public will, increasing public and private investment, and also funding and supporting Great Start collaboratives. The Early Childhood Investment Corporation leverages and invests both public and private dollars to accomplish these goals.

Governance

The ECIC is a public, nonprofit corporation that operates within the public and private sectors. It has a corporate board that meets annually and is composed of members from each local signatory to the interlocal agreement and members appointed by the governor. The corporate board approves the ECIC's annual budget and audit. Its executive committee governs the corporation's day-to-day operations. Members of the executive committee represent business, government, philanthropy, health, research, local communities, and parents.

To help communities develop, implement, and evaluate local, comprehensive early childhood systems, the ECIC offers grants to build community capacity and fund Great Start collaboratives. The goal is have a Great Start collaborative in every intermediate school district by 2010. As of March 2008, 32 Great Start collaboratives reside in 57 intermediate school districts in the state. (Depending on

the population size of the county, the intermediate school district may cover more than one county.) The ISD serves as the fiduciary and convener for each collaborative. Staff working for the collaborative bring together diverse stakeholders, including parents, businesses, local government, health and human services providers, labor agencies, faith-based organizations, and philanthropic organizations, to plan, oversee, and govern the development of a comprehensive, local early childhood system. Parents' role in the governing bodies is a high priority; they are provided honorariums, child care and travel expenses, and professional development opportunities. In addition to serving on the collaborative body itself, each Great Start collaborative is expected to create and support a Parent Coalition.

Funding

The department of human services³⁴ has assigned approximately \$15 million in Child Care and Development Block Grant funds to the ECIC to administer Michigan's child care quality improvement contracts.³⁵ In FY2007, the ECIC received a \$1 million appropriation from the School Aid Fund to leverage a \$6.5 million grant from the Kellogg Foundation. In FY2008, an additional \$750,000 was appropriated from the School Aid Fund and the Kresge Foundation has provided a \$2.7 million grant to fund Great Start collaboratives in southeastern Michigan and for ECIC capacity building. The Joyce Foundation has also provided funds to the ECIC for work building public will to address early childhood issues. Federal Early Childhood Comprehensive Systems and Head Start State Coordination Office grants are also administered through the ECIC. Additional funding and assistance have been provided to the ECIC by the National Governors Association, the Smart Start National Technical Assistance Center, and the Build Initiative.

Activities

At the state level, the ECIC works to develop and disseminate knowledge through early childhood research, conduct public education and build public will, increase pub-

lic and private investment, and fund and support Great Start collaboratives. The specific components of the Great Start system include physical health, social and emotional health, family support and parenting education, early care and education, and basic needs, economic security, and child safety. Results have been established for each component area, along with data indicators that provide measures of how well both Michigan and the Great Start collaboratives are doing in achieving each of these results. The results and indicators are the foundation for the local early childhood system assessment completed by each collaborative and the collaboratives' subsequent multiyear strategic plans and annual action agendas.

As part of the collaborative grant, a set-aside is provided to each Great Start collaborative to fund the development of a local Great Start parent coalition. The parent coalitions provide a venue for parents to become engaged in the public education activities, the building of public will, and the community change process that will lead to comprehensive services being available for all young children and their parents.

A competitive request for proposals³⁶ was first offered to intermediate school districts in October 2005 for the convening of Great Start collaboratives.³⁷ Applicants provided information on their history of community collaboration and their community needs and assets. They were also asked to provide evidence of the commitment of the potential Great Start collaborative members—agency directors and other organizational leaders in the community—to building a local, comprehensive early childhood system. Up to \$150,000 in funding was offered to each collaborative; a 10 percent match is required.³⁸ On January 11, 2006, the ECIC executive committee met to approve funding for the first round of local Great Start collaboratives; 38 proposals were received, reviewed, and rated by teams.

The application was based on a set of rubrics used to determine the “readiness” of each community to establish a Great Start collaborative and complete the work outlined in the grant application.³⁹ Funding was distributed in two ways. In 2005, \$820,000 in grants (ranging from \$90,000 to \$150,000) was approved for seven communities that were “ready” to establish Great Start collaboratives; \$420,000 in capacity-building grants (ranging from \$50,000 to \$70,000) was given to seven communities that were considered “almost ready.”

In October 2006, the ECIC provided funding for seven additional Great Start collaboratives. These were sites that

were deemed “ready” in the initial application process, but for which no funds were available initially. The seven communities that received capacity-building grants were all provided with additional funds and brought up to Great Start collaborative status, based on their progress. Each of the 21 Great Start collaboratives has paid staff. Each also received an additional \$10,000 to support a parent liaison staff member for its local Great Start parent coalition.⁴⁰

In addition to the local partnership work, ECIC has focused on public investment accountability. Working with the Washington D.C.-based Finance Project, state funding for early childhood has been mapped showing where state investment is strong and where it is not. Local partnerships are now working on the second phase, which will show how this investment impacts their communities. ECIC expects this work to be a jumping-off point for finance reform that will streamline funding to local communities and require more accountability for results. In addition, ECIC is focused on growing its stakeholder table with outreach activities aimed at the legislature, business community, school groups and others important to the Great Start mission. Board external advisory committees have been developed around each component of the Great Start system. Projects ranging from Ready Schools to revamping childcare are well under way. In 2007, ECIC hosted two state-wide events that will become annual activities including an advocacy day for all early childhood enthusiasts and also the Michigan Early Childhood Challenge, where stakeholders developed Michigan's first consensus policy agenda for early childhood.

Evaluation

The ECIC is responsible for evaluating the local and state-wide systems on the basis of expected outcomes. Each Great Start collaborative has a contract with the ECIC that specifies performance measures.⁴¹ The ECIC's role is to define expectations, define and monitor performance standards, and establish baseline data for local Great Start communities. The ECIC also is charged with tracking economic outcome data and compiling and sharing state and local system evaluation data. In exchange for funding, local Great Start communities must identify and report on performance measures for community assessment and planning. Great Start collaboratives provide narrative reports on their progress toward achieving these performance measures.



NEBRASKA

Nebraska Early Childhood Education Endowment www.earlychildhoodendowment.org

Background

LB 1256, passed in the 2006 legislative session, establishes an Early Childhood Education Endowment to fund quality birth-to-age three services for at-risk children all across Nebraska. The legislation establishes a public-private partnership to support the endowment, with a commitment of \$40 million in public funds matched by \$20 million from private philanthropic sources.⁴² In November 2006, voters approved a constitutional amendment to permanently establish public funding for the Early Childhood Education Endowment through the use of Educational Land Trust Funds.

The Nebraska Early Childhood Coalition designed and promoted the endowment legislation. The coalition is composed of advocates, early childhood providers, post-secondary early childhood instructors, and state early childhood administrators from the education and health and human services departments and the Nebraska Early Childhood Training Center. It was successful in 2005 in promoting legislation that doubled the state investment in early childhood services for at-risk three- and four-year-olds and rolled the funding for at-risk four-year-olds into the state aid to education formula. The endowment structure was proposed to provide a sustainable funding mechanism, one that would generate funds across time and would survive budget cuts in tough economic times.

A constitutional amendment was necessary to access the Educational Land Trust Funds, which must go to support public schools. Early childhood education needed to be included as an allowable educational purpose of public schools. Consequently, the amendment not only permanently established funding for the endowment, but also defined early childhood education as an educational purpose of the public schools; defined early childhood educa-

tion as services for children from birth to kindergarten-entrance age; and defined early childhood education to include early learning, social-emotional development, and other experiences that promote healthy development.

Governance

A board of trustees administers the endowment's grant allocation process. As prescribed in legislation, all board members are appointed by the governor and include the Commissioner of Education, Director of Health and Human Services, two early childhood professionals from rural and urban areas, and two persons recommended by the endowment provider to represent the private investors in the endowment.

The board of trustees will define the parameters for receiving endowment grants and provide oversight vis à vis grant implementation and evaluation. Appointments to the board of trustees were finalized in early 2007, and the first board meeting was held in May 2007.

The endowment legislation requires the state board of education to select an endowment provider that will be responsible for raising the \$20 million in private contributions to the endowment and for managing and investing these private dollars. The board of education selected the Nebraska Children and Families Foundation to be the endowment provider.

Funding

The state designates earnings—approximately \$2 million annually—from a \$40 million endowment fund, and the private endowment provider designates earnings—approximately \$1 million—from a \$20 million endowment funded by donations from private entities. The earnings from these two funds are merged into a cash fund that supports competitive grants to local school districts and their community-based partners to provide quality early childhood experiences for at-risk children below age three.

**Activities**

The endowment's competitive grants will be awarded to school districts to partner with local agencies or programs in their communities for birth-to-age three services for at-risk children (e.g., Head Start programs and private providers). Grants will require a match of at least 50 percent of total program costs. Grants will have requirements that harmonize current early childhood education program grants issued by the Nebraska Department of Education.

Evaluation

The endowment legislation set aside 5 percent of the annual endowment earnings for evaluation of the grant services.

Next Steps

Local grants will be awarded in summer 2008.



NORTH CAROLINA

**North Carolina Smart Start:
The North Carolina Partnership for Children, Inc.**
www.smartstart-nc.org

Background

The North Carolina Partnership for Children, Inc. (NCPC) was authorized in 1993 through Chapter 321-Senate Bill 27 (codified as “§ 143B-168.10. Early childhood initiatives”) to provide statewide oversight, along with the health and human resources department, in developing and implementing the Smart Start initiative. NCPC is a public-private nonprofit organization that provides oversight and technical support to Smart Start’s local partnerships. In 1996, administrative responsibilities for Smart Start were transferred completely to NCPC. Smart Start is the state’s initiative to strengthen service delivery by supporting early childhood systems at the local level. In addition, NCPC provides technical assistance and oversight to local partnerships, helping them strengthen the quality of child care, increase affordability and access, provide health-related services, and offer family support.

Governance

NCPC is a statewide nonprofit organization that provides oversight and technical assistance for Smart Start local partnerships in the areas of program and organizational development, administration, communication, fiscal and contract management, technology, and fundraising. NCPC began with 12 partnerships encompassing 18 counties. Currently, 78 local partnerships—all separate 501(c)(3) organizations—are established throughout the state and include all 100 counties. They are legally responsible for the Smart Start funding that is allocated to them and for outcomes NCPC measures annually.

A legislatively established advisory committee, made up of 15 local partnership board chairs and executive directors, acts as an advisory group to the NCPC board. Two of its members serve on the NCPC board. State legislators were originally members of the NCPC board, but board membership was changed following a state attorney gen-

eral ruling that their board participation was illegal. Currently, NCPC’s 26-member board of directors represents parents, state agencies, private businesses, public and higher education institutions, nonprofit groups, religious organizations, and child care providers. The joint appropriations committee on health and human services is responsible for legislative oversight of Smart Start.

The local partnership board composition is determined by NCPC and currently consists of board positions that are similar to the NCPC board. Each local partnership selects its board members based on one of the two board structures NCPC has approved. Local partnership boards are responsible for assessing local needs, developing annual plans, allocating Smart Start funds to meet those needs, and meeting Smart Start performance standards.

Funding⁴³

Originally appropriated \$20 million in 1993, Smart Start currently receives \$205.5 million in state funds, down from its 2000 peak of \$231 million. Smart Start is required to raise \$1 for every \$10 it receives from the state and has raised more than \$319 million in donations since 1994. Major contributors (\$1 million or more) include the W. K. Kellogg Foundation, the Wachovia Foundation, Bank of America, the David & Lucile Packard Foundation, AT&T, BB&T, Blue Cross and Blue Shield of North Carolina, Carnegie Corporation, the Duke Endowment, Duke Energy, Food Lion, GlaxoSmithKline, IBM, and Progress Energy Carolina’s Inc. Based on the legislative requirement, the fundraising goal for 2006–2007 was \$20 million; NCPC and the local partnerships raised \$31 million.

Activities

Services at the local level vary depending on local needs. Of the funds allocated to local partnerships for direct services, 70 percent must be used in child care-related activities and early childhood programs that improve access to, develop new, and improve the quality of child care and early childhood education services in all settings. Thirty percent of Smart Start’s funds allocated to local partner-

ships for direct services must be used to expand child care subsidies and is included in the 70 percent child care-related requirement. No funds may be used for capital projects. Administrative costs cannot exceed 8 percent of the total statewide allocation to all local partnerships. NCPC determines the administrative allocation for each partnership, which ranges from 3.5 percent to 33 percent of each local partnership's service funds, based on the size of the partnership's allocation.

Once partnerships are approved for funding, their funding continues so long as they meet performance goals and are fiscally sound. The NCPC board reviews and approves local partnerships' annual funding plans.

In 2001, NCPC established a National Technical Assistance Center to help other states develop an early care and education initiative. Technical assistance and grants of between \$50,000 and \$150,000 are available to states interested in doing so.

Local partnerships annually fund various programs for children, from birth to kindergarten age, that include child care subsidies, higher subsidies for higher quality child care, More at Four Pre-K, quality enhancement programs, access to health programs, child care health consultants, dental programs, parent resource programs, home visiting programs, and child care resource and referral services.

Evaluation

Evaluation was originally done through a contract from the North Carolina Department of Health and Human Services. The Smart Start Evaluation Team at the Frank Porter

Graham Child Development Institute of the University of North Carolina at Chapel Hill has conducted the statewide evaluation of North Carolina's Smart Start Initiative for more than 10 years and completed more than 35 research studies.⁴⁴ Results of the studies show that child care quality in the state has steadily increased since 1993, and participation in Smart Start-funded activities is significantly and positively related to child care quality. Moreover, children who attend higher quality centers score significantly higher on measures of skills and abilities deemed important for success in kindergarten than children from lower quality centers. Children with Smart Start's support are healthier, are more likely to be immunized on time, and have a primary source of health care.⁴⁵

Every local partnership is responsible for evaluating its programs and makes future decisions based on those evaluations. A state performance-based incentive system sets performance goals for every partnership and annually measures and reports the results. Partnerships that do not meet their performance goals may have their funding redirected or withheld.

In addition, an economic impact study found that child care in North Carolina generates more than \$1.7 billion in direct revenue and directly supports the employment of more than 46,000 people. Child care problems can result in employee absences and turnover. Unscheduled absences cost businesses an average of \$60,000 to \$3.6 million annually, depending on the size of the firm. Turnover is estimated to cost 1.5 times an employee's salary.⁴⁶



OKLAHOMA

Early Childhood Pilot Program Educare

Background

For several decades, Oklahoma's public and private leaders have championed early childhood education through partnerships. These partnerships have developed largely because of the volume of research supporting quality educational experiences in the early years and the need that public school programs had to access space for the growing number of constituents who wanted early education for their children. In addition, champions in the private sector who represent many of the state's charitable foundations, community agencies, child care, and early intervention programs, recognize that what Oklahoma offers through its public education program is of the highest quality standards in the nation. As such, their partnerships with public education became the vehicle through which they could both maximize available private and public resources and increase program quality to the kinds of standards that research supports.

Public-private partnerships did not just happen overnight. They have required commitment from both the public and private sector—the kind of commitment that takes statewide coordination, systematic planning, ongoing dialogue, and tremendous effort on the part of the private sector to push past the silos that can easily occur in the early education arena.

These champions, both in the private work of early childhood and the public, have become nationally recognized experts who have successfully advocated for and implemented a model public-private partnership that the state legislature has now adopted as the Early Childhood Pilot Project for birth to four-year-olds.

During the 2006 legislative session, Oklahoma appropriated funds to the state education department for a new public-private early childhood pilot program for infants and toddlers. This pilot was initiated from the private sector, with support from the public sector, to create a replicable model for early education programs that prioritize

serving the most at-risk children. Family support, early education, intervening services, health care, and mental health care are provided. In 2007, the state legislature approved an increase of \$5 million, giving the Early Childhood Pilot Program \$10 million for implementation.

Governance

The Oklahoma Department of Education oversees implementation of the state's universal prekindergarten program through local school districts along with other early childhood programs. The state legislature charged the department with developing a competitive grant process for determining the awardees of the new pilot program appropriations. The Tulsa Community Action Project was selected to roll out the Early Childhood Pilot Program statewide. For its first year, Smart Start Oklahoma, a 29-member nonprofit partnership organization, provided additional project coordination and technical assistance. During its second year, the Tulsa Community Action Project took on all project coordination and continues to receive technical assistance from the education department.

Funding

The state committed up to \$5 million in funding in the first year to match \$10 million from private philanthropic sources. In 2007, the state appropriated \$10 million, with a \$15 million private-sector match. Communities awarded a subgrant from the Tulsa Community Action Project for the Early Childhood Pilot Program must demonstrate private funding from within their community to be selected for program participation.

Programming

The pilot model allows for three-star facilities—the highest star rating of the state's child care quality rating system—or Head Start programs to create and/or expand their slots for infants and children up to age four for low-income families, with state money earmarked for operating expenses and private funding directed to capital costs. By the end of 2007, 1,200 slots were added or enhanced, 150 classrooms

were added, and 15 community providers were operating the Early Childhood Pilot Program in 20 communities across the state.

Pilot regulations contain the following provisions:

- Qualifying children are those from birth to age four who are identified as at risk, as determined by federal poverty guidelines.
- Qualifying programs must meet child care licensing requirements, as provided by the Oklahoma Department of Human Services, for children from birth to age four.
- The adult-child ratio must meet minimum child care licensing requirements, as provided by the Oklahoma Department of Human Services, for children from birth to age four. The provider must ensure the operational schedule is a minimum of eight hours per day for 50 weeks per year. Children will be served 48 weeks, with two additional weeks for staff training.
- Staffing requirements include:
 - The lead teacher must hold early childhood certification and a bachelor's degree;
 - The assistant teacher must hold a minimum of an associate's degree (60 college credits) in child development or a related field;
 - The classroom aide must hold a minimum of a high school diploma and a child development associate degree (120 clock hours);
 - Each staff member must undergo a Federal Bureau of Investigation background check; and
 - The provider must employ a family support worker whose caseload must be approximately 50 families.

- All staff must participate in initial training and annual training in infant and toddler development, curriculum, and parent education.
- The curriculum must be aligned with Oklahoma's early learning guidelines for infants and toddlers.
- All programs must undergo an annual program evaluation.

The Tulsa Community Action Project also requires the provider to be a three-star facility, to meet or exceed Head Start performance standards, and to maintain low child-teacher ratios for each age group.

Evaluation

The Early Childhood Pilot Program must undergo annual program evaluations.

Next Steps

Oklahoma is the first state in the nation to have two Educare sites, one in Tulsa (since 2006) and one in Oklahoma City (scheduled to open in March 2009). The Early Childhood Pilot Program is modeled after Educare, and some of the pilot funds impact children enrolled or who will be enrolled at these two sites.

Oklahoma plans to continue working toward developing a replicable model of high-quality early education programs for children from birth to age four. This includes further expansion of this program and consideration of other Educare sites in Oklahoma.



SOUTH CAROLINA

South Carolina First Steps to School Readiness www.scfirststeps.org

Background

Initiated by Governor Jim Hodges, South Carolina First Steps to School Readiness was signed into law in June 1999 (Section 59-102) to help improve school readiness outcomes for the state's youngest learners. First Steps is established as a 501(c)3 to mobilize partners and resources beyond state-allocated dollars. This status also enables the nonprofit entity to leverage local private and public funds, federal grants, planned gifts, in-kind contributions, and volunteer time to fill service gaps or extend services previously unavailable to young children and their families.

Governance

The legislation established a board of trustees to implement and oversee the First Steps to School Readiness statewide initiative. The sitting governor serves as the state board chair and the superintendent of education serves as a voting member of the board. The governor, president pro tempore of the senate, and speaker of the house of representatives together appoint 20 additional voting members who represent the business, early education, medical, and child care sectors. The heads of all state agencies serving young children and their families serve as non-voting state board members. Other organization representatives may be added to the state board through bylaws to increase collaboration or expand early learning services to children from birth to age five.

To ensure these services are delivered effectively, every one of South Carolina's 46 counties has a First Steps county partnership board established by law that is composed of parents, business and community leaders, early education professionals, and faith-based and agency partners. Board members are elected locally by existing partnership board members, with nominations taken from the communities at large. The legislative delegations in each county can also appoint up to four additional local partnership board members. Each First Steps county partner-

ship board is an autonomous entity, receiving funding and operating within the accountability parameters established by the state board of trustees. These local-level partnership boards identify specific community needs and foster collaboration among service providers to fill program gaps for young children, their parents, and caregivers.

Activities

Initially serving South Carolina children with 100 percent state-allocated monies (with a required 15 percent local match), First Steps is currently funded with approximately 70 percent state funds and 30 percent federal and private funds and in-kind donations. Between 1999 and 2004, state appropriations totaled \$94,880,000. In addition to base funds of \$18.1 million in 2005, the state legislature set aside \$3 million in unspent education lottery proceeds to First Steps. These funds are used as a dollar-for-dollar match to leverage new local, federal, or private funding devoted to early childhood services for at-risk children from birth to age four.

In 2006, in response to the state's school equity ruling citing the need for expanded early childhood services to children in poverty, the legislature allocated an additional \$9.85 million to First Steps for the expansion of kindergarten for four-year-olds in nonpublic or community-based settings and the expansion of the Centers of Excellence project in trial and plaintiff districts.

In 2007, the legislature appropriated \$20.3 million in base state funding for First Steps, with an additional allocation of \$11.85 million for prekindergarten expansion and other services to younger children. First Steps continued its role in the state's expansion of kindergarten services to at-risk four-year-olds. It also received significant new funds from the U.S. Department of Education and the Duke Endowment to expand prekindergarten literacy efforts through Early Reading First and to implement the state's Nurse-Family Partnership pilot project, respectively. Since its inception, significant (\$500,000 or more) First Steps' private funders have included Bank of America, the J. Marion Sims Foundation, the Psaras Foundation, the

Wachovia Foundation, the Duke Endowment, the CP&L Progress Energy Foundation, the Duke Energy Foundation, SCANA Corporation, South Carolina Blue Cross/Blue Shield, and Springs Industries.

State Board Composition

The state board is composed of the governor, the state superintendent of education, and 20 appointed members. The governor appoints two members from each of the following sectors:

- Parents of young children;
- The business community;
- Early childhood educators;
- Medical or child care and development providers; and
- The general assembly, including one member from the senate and one member from the house of representatives.

The president pro tempore of the senate appoints one member from each of the following sectors:

- Parents of young children;
- The business community;
- Early childhood educators; and
- Medical or child care and development providers.

The speaker of the house of representatives appoints one member from each of the following sectors:

- Parents of young children;
- The business community;
- Early childhood educators; and
- Medical or child care and development providers.

The chairman of the senate education committee, or his or her designee, is also a member.

The chairman of the house education and public works committee, or his or her designee, serves on the board, too.

The chief executive officer of each of the following, or his or her designee, serves as an ex-officio, nonvoting member:

- The Department of Social Services;
- The Department of Health and Environmental Control;
- The Department of Health and Human Services;
- The Department of Mental Health;
- The Department of Disabilities and Special Needs;
- The Department of Alcohol and Other Drug Abuse Services;
- The Department of Transportation; and
- The Budget and Control Board, Division of Research and Statistics.

The following organizations can designate one member to serve as an ex-officio, nonvoting member:

- The South Carolina State Library;
- The Transportation Association of South Carolina; and
- The South Carolina Advisory Committee on the Regulation of Child Day Care Facilities.

In addition, the state board has added the following positions to the board through bylaws:

- State president, United Way of South Carolina;
- Chief executive, South Carolina Education Oversight Committee; and
- Chief executive, South Carolina School Boards Association.

Programs

The First Steps' board of trustees is mandated to allocate funds by demographic formula to county partnerships. The formula is based on per-capita income and population distribution variables (30 percent population of young children, 25 percent children eligible for free or reduced-price lunches, 20 percent average per-capita income, and 25 percent South Carolina Kids Count risk factors). The local partnership boards work to identify local needs, resources, and collaboration opportunities to increase services to children annually. Each partnership may offer different First Steps services, depending on the needs of its county.

First Steps county partnerships submit annual renewal plans reporting community needs, prior-year results, and strategies and funding priorities for the upcoming fiscal year. The state board of trustees reviews and approves these plans. State office staff members provide technical assistance.

Each local partnership leverages resources to increase the quality and availability of early care and learning programs throughout South Carolina. Each also promotes the importance of health and nutrition in securing the long-term academic success and well-being of young children. Moreover, First Steps supports parents and families in their own efforts to develop school readiness and child well-being, helping to ensure school entry is a smooth and beneficial transition for the state's youngest learners.

Five primary school readiness strategy areas have been the focus of First Steps' county partnerships and state-level programming since inception:

- Family strengthening, including literacy, parent education, and mentoring;

- A healthy start, including screenings and developmental assessment and prenatal and nutrition services;
- Quality child care, including quality enhancement grants, technical assistance, scholarships for children, and increases in provider education levels;
- Early education, including the expansion of public and private prekindergarten services and Head Start); and
- School transition, including the nationally recognized Countdown to Kindergarten program.

Evaluation

Legislation requires First Steps to contract with an outside evaluator to measure program effectiveness every three years. The first evaluation, conducted in 2003, focused on implementation and addressed whether First Steps was doing “the right things, in the right ways, for the right people.”⁴⁷ Calling First Steps “ambitious and innovative,” the report notes that First Steps has engendered a “culture

of accountability” regarding expenditures and program implementation. The Child Trends evaluation told South Carolina that First Steps is “on the right track.”⁴⁸

The second evaluation in 2006 shifted the focus to outcomes and whether First Steps is “getting the right results.” The study by High/Scope showed that First Steps successfully targeted resources to the neediest and poorest children statewide. It also found a demonstrated improvement in the academic achievement of four-year old program participants by the time they reached kindergarten and a demonstrated improvement in child care program quality.⁴⁹ Positive findings cultivated strong support among critical stakeholders. First Steps was unanimously reauthorized through 2013 by the state legislature in February 2006. Governor Mark Sanford signed the reauthorization bill, appearing alongside First Steps’ original champion, former Governor Jim Hodges.



Building Bright Futures
www.buildingbrightfutures.org

Background

Vermont joined nationwide efforts to improve early childhood services in 1997 as a part of Carnegie Corporation's Starting Points project. In 2002, Vermont received a technical assistance grant from the North Carolina Smart Start National Technical Assistance Center to create a unified early childhood system and to support a formal planning process, which included a strategic plan and timetable for implementation. The Access to Early Care, Education, and Prevention Subcommittee of the Governor's Cabinet on Children and Youth oversaw this grant. The subcommittee included diverse representation from relevant government agencies and early childhood programs as well as from various organizations and businesses. The work supported by the technical assistance grant was also based on and integrated with the work of:

- The Vermont State Team for Children, Families and Individuals;
- The Vermont Early Childhood Work Group;
- The Vermont Agency of Human Services' reorganization effort; and
- Other human services and education entities in Vermont.

A Child Development Division was created as part of the Vermont Agency of Human Services' reorganization. The new division consolidated oversight and management of existing programs, such as child care, home visiting, Part C early intervention, and early childhood mental health.

Vermont received an Early Childhood Comprehensive Systems grant from the U.S. Department of Health and Human Services. A strategic planning process, involving broad representation from the early care, health and education sectors, resulted in the creation of Vermont's Early Childhood System Plan.⁵⁰ This plan has served as a resource for the regional and state planning now taking place through Building Bright Futures.

Established by executive order in 2006, Building Bright Futures is an innovative public-private partnership working to ensure the state's children are healthy and successful by building a system of coordinated and integrated services and funding and improving the quality, affordability, and accessibility of health, education, and early care services for families with children from birth to age six.

Governance

The 19-member state council for Building Bright Futures, established by executive order in June 2006, is composed of parents, business leaders, community members, private-sector providers, and state government decision-makers. Through the state council, broad policy issues, outcome accountability, planning, and finance coordination can be addressed, with the aims of developing an infrastructure to support an integrated system, advising departments on policy development, and advising the governor on early childhood issues. In addition, through this entity, multiple public and private funding can be secured to fill identified needs. A strong working committee structure reports to the council on issues that require attention.

As stated in the executive order, the council advises the governor and supports the creation and implementation of an integrated system of early childhood care, health, and education that will ensure equitable access for all children and families seeking services, maximize existing resources, align resources with desired outcomes in a consistent, measurable manner, and improve the well-being of Vermont's children and families. The council is responsible for coordinating the system, providing recommendations to the governor on the status and needs of young children, and conducting research to establish Building Bright Futures as a permanent entity through legislation.⁵¹

A full-time Building Bright Futures executive director supports the work of the state council and its committees. The executive director also supervises the work of the regional directors using a shared supervision model with the steering committees of each regional council.

Locally, the 12 Building Bright Futures regional councils, each with a regional director, coordinate regional programs, collect outcome data, communicate local gaps in service to the state council, and develop regional plans for service delivery. The regional directors have been hired and trained, and they are now beginning their regional service inventory, results-based accountability process, and local systems development.

Each regional council is engaged in a regional planning process using the results-based accountability planning model.⁵² This planning process began with identifying the state outcomes associated with early childhood that will be addressed. Next, each region chose indicators that, over time, will measure progress toward the outcomes. The state council chose one indicator for all regions to address—the percentage of children ready for school in the five domains of social-emotional development, approaches to learning, communication, cognitive development, and health and well-being. Each region has chosen two additional indicators to measure. The planning process will culminate in the completion of an action plan for each indicator, detailing the strategies that will be used to “turn the curve” on the indicators.

Regional council plans are scheduled to be completed June 30, 2008. These plans will include action recommendations to the state council on state policy and funding barriers related to the chosen indicators.

Funding

Funding for Building Bright Futures supports the infrastructure, including the 12 regional directors, the executive director, and the committees. A \$100,000 state appropriation and state and federal resources used for early childhood system coordination support the budget. The state provides in-kind support, such as administrative services and office space. Direct service funds are not diverted to support the infrastructure. Tuition and private fees that are supporting early care, health, and education services will remain in the system.

Philanthropic partners at the Vermont Community Foundation also support the long-term sustainability of Building Bright Futures at both the state and regional levels and with other future funders. In 2007, the Vermont Community Foundation pledged \$200,000 over three

years to coordinate activities with Building Bright Futures and support the development of STARS (STep Ahead Recognition System), Vermont’s child care quality rating system.

Evaluation

The evaluation approach builds on the overall focus on results-based accountability. On the regional and state levels, long-term success will be measured by whether the indicator data “improves” or “turns the curve.” Short-term success will be measured by tracking performance measures of the strategies identified in the regional action plans. Monitoring of performance measures enables a region to determine whether a specific strategy is working and to modify the action plan based on this information.

In addition, Building Bright Futures, through the state’s Early Childhood Comprehensive Systems grant, will soon embark on an evaluation of the state and regional system. Consultants to this process include David Murphey, a senior policy analyst with the Vermont Agency of Human Services, and Charlie Bruner, executive director of the Child and Family Policy Center, a nonprofit organization established in 1989 “to better link research and policy on issues vital to children and families.”

Next Steps

In the short term, Vermont faces two major but achievable challenges. Building Bright Futures recently received an extension of the executive order for an additional year, which had been set to expire June 30, 2008. This extension enables the state and regional councils to build momentum and lay the initial groundwork prior to accomplishing the ultimate goal of establishing Building Bright Futures as a permanent entity through legislation introduced in the 2009 session.

The second challenge is to successfully continue and build upon the tremendous work of the regional councils. These entities will ground the early childhood systems work at the community level, where families live and providers deliver services. With new leadership, new planning tools, and a results-based accountability framework, these councils are positioned to implement the Building Bright Futures vision and share lessons learned with state leaders.



VIRGINIA

Smart Beginnings:
The Virginia Early Childhood Foundation
www.smartbeginnings.org

Background

In 2006, Governor Tim Kaine launched Smart Beginnings, an initiative that promotes investments in early childhood development. This effort provides a comprehensive context and complement to Governor Kaine's Start Strong plan to increase access to high-quality preschool for four-year olds in Virginia.

The Smart Beginnings initiative grew out of former Governor Mark R. Warner's 2005 gubernatorial task force, the Virginia Early Learning Council, which recommended establishing a public-private partnership to build Virginia's infrastructure for a cohesive, statewide early childhood system.⁵³ Taking action on this recommendation, Governor Warner facilitated the establishment of the Virginia Early Childhood Foundation (VECF) in December 2005. VECF integrates public and private funding streams and offers systems-building grants to local coalitions. Communities use these grants to improve existing programs, synchronize early childhood services, and track programmatic outcomes. VECF also builds public awareness of the importance of early childhood development through its Smart Beginnings Web site, a virtual portal for stakeholder engagement.

Governance

No executive order, legislation, or gubernatorial appointments were used to establish VECF. Governor Warner allocated state general funds for the organization in his final budget and named its first 10 board members. Virginia's governor serves only one term, so it was important to establish an organization in the private sector. In this way, a consistent, nonpartisan focus could be maintained on an early childhood agenda, reducing the impact of a change in the administration every four years.

VECF is a state-level 501(c)3 organization governed by a self-perpetuating board currently composed of 25 mem-

bers. In addition to business, community, and education leaders, the board includes the following administration officials, on an ex-officio basis: the secretaries of the education, health and human resources, and commerce and trade as well as the executive director of the Governor's Working Group on Early Childhood Initiatives.

The executive director of the Governor's Working Group on Early Childhood Initiatives and the president of the Virginia Early Learning Foundation further coordinate the work of the public and private sectors as co-chairs of the state's early childhood strategic plan, Virginia's Plan for Smart Beginnings. This initiative grew out of the state's Early Childhood Comprehensive System grant from the federal Maternal and Child Health Bureau.

VECF has also helped create community partnerships that are represented by diverse leadership councils.⁵⁴ Each leadership council is a local decision-making body that links existing early childhood services, develops strategies for identifying and filling gaps in services, and works to ensure all Smart Beginnings components are available to every family and child in the community.

Funding

VECF pools both public and private dollars and works in partnership with the administration. Initial funding from state general funds totaled \$1 million for the first year (July 1, 2006–June 30, 2007); \$1.5 million for the second year (FY 2007–2008). Funding of \$1.5 million per year has been appropriated by the General Assembly for fiscal years 2009 and 2010. A half-million dollars in federal Child Care and Development Fund monies have also been granted to the foundation through the state's social services department. VECF has pledged a dollar-for-dollar private match for every public dollar invested, with some of those funds being raised and paid directly to the local coalitions.

The foundation provides competitive grants and technical assistance to local coalitions formed to build capacity and infrastructure for the delivery of quality early childhood programs. The 16 local coalitions have leveraged more than \$1.6 million from numerous local corporate

and civic partners for their work on projects funded by the Smart Beginnings grants.

VECF's private partners include Capital One, Dominion Resources, Ferguson Enterprises, Inc., Freddie Mac Foundation, and Virginia Natural Gas. Astyra Corporation, Capital One, The McCormick Group, Number One Design, and the United Way of Greater Richmond & Petersburg have provided in-kind support.

Activities

The Virginia Early Childhood Foundation leads, coordinates, and supports collaborative efforts to build a statewide comprehensive system of high-quality early childhood care, education, and health services that is based on common goals, local solutions, and parent involvement. Through Smart Beginnings, VECF brings an intelligent, a measurable, and a results-oriented approach to investments to increase school readiness. The foundation's primary goals are these:⁵⁵

Infrastructure: Work in partnership with state government to provide competitive grants and technical assistance to local coalitions and leadership councils formed to build capacity and infrastructure in local communities for the delivery of quality early care and education programs.

Communication: Promote a vigorous and persistent public awareness initiative to build a clear understanding of the long-term economic and social benefits of investments in high-quality early care and education.

Innovation: Stimulate proactive, innovative approaches to early care and education that produce successful results and spotlight best practice models. Encourage statewide best practices through technical assistance and learning communities.

Evaluation and Accountability: Maintain a commitment to measurable outcomes at the state and local levels. Participate in national and statewide efforts to identify effective evaluation strategies and implement these throughout Virginia. Track outcomes for local initiatives and state-level results.

The Virginia Early Childhood Foundation offers grants to local communities to help them build a strong system of high-quality early childhood care and education programs for young children, from birth to kindergarten age, with the ultimate goal of helping children enter school ready to learn and succeed. The grants seek to bring together

local stakeholders to design and develop a comprehensive infrastructure at the local level that expands, enhances, and supports such programs. In the second year of operation, grants totaling \$2.45 million were awarded to 16 local coalitions.

Smart Beginnings Partnership Grants. In 2007, VECF competitively awarded grants totaling \$1.7 million for a two-year period to four Smart Beginnings partnerships. A 50 percent match by grantees was required. The local partnerships will use these grants to plan, develop, establish, expand, or improve the quality of early childhood care and education programs for young children. The foundation's ability to award more than four Smart Beginnings Partnership Grants will depend on its efforts and future state appropriations.

Smart Beginnings Planning Grants. For communities that are in the early planning stages and are not yet ready to implement a partnership grant, the foundation committed \$450,000 to nine local partnerships in the state. These grants will enable communities to pursue activities such as forming a leadership council, conducting a community needs assessment, developing an early childhood strategic plan, building interagency collaboration, developing community engagement campaigns, and jumpstarting initiatives for high-quality services and care (e.g., child care, home visiting, early learning, provider training, and services for children transitioning to kindergarten). Each community received a one-year grant for \$50,000 and is required to contribute a 10 percent match.

Smart Beginnings Sustaining Grants. Three grantees of the initial Governor's Early Childhood Partnership Grants awarded in 2005 during the Warner administration were awarded funding of \$100,000 each over a two-year period to sustain their current activities.⁵⁶ These communities are required to contribute a 100 percent match.

Evaluation

VECF is quickly assuming its role to provide technical assistance to community grantees on evaluation methods and requirements. The foundation hosts evaluation workshops where communities can develop a common understanding and approach to measuring progress so collective lessons and progress toward intended outcomes can be identified, despite considerable variation in each grantee's goals and activities.

The image shows a decorative header for the Washington section. It features a light orange background with abstract, overlapping circular and geometric shapes. On the left, the word "WASHINGTON" is written in a bold, orange, sans-serif font. To the right of the text is a solid orange silhouette of the state of Washington. The overall design is clean and modern, with a warm color palette.

WASHINGTON

Thrive by Five: The Washington Early Learning Fund www.thrivebyfivewa.org

Background

In 2005, momentum in the public sector to explore ways to improve early learning opportunities met with private-sector interest in similar goals. The state legislature created Washington Learns, a commission that Governor Christine Gregoire asked to explore necessary improvements to the state's early learning, K–12, and higher education systems. Washington Learns examined the state's "birth through lifelong learning" education system and created a framework for significantly strengthening the state's ability to offer a learner-focused, seamless, world-class education system during the next 10 years. One of the first recommendations was to create a cabinet-level Department of Early Learning to coordinate early learning services and programs. Established through legislation in July 2006, the department's mission, "with parents and partners," is to offer children world-class learning opportunities so they reach their full potential. The department is responsible for child care licensing, state-funded preschool programs, quality initiatives, child care subsidy policy, early reading initiatives, and Head Start collaboration work.⁵⁷

While this was happening in the public sector, momentum was building in the private sector to create a public-private partnership in the state that could work with the new department of early learning to advance early learning goals. These discussions culminated in the signing of a memorandum of understanding by key public and private funding partners and the establishment of Thrive by Five Washington in May 2006. The partnership is a champion for early learning improvement, and its goal is for every child, from birth to age five, to experience positive early learning environments. Thrive by Five partners with parents, government, businesses, communities, philanthropic organizations, and early learning professionals to develop a sustainable system for statewide early learning improvement, ensuring children in Washington are ready to succeed in school and thrive in life.

Creation of this statewide public-private partnership was an early recommendation of Washington Learns, Governor Gregoire's 18-month, comprehensive study to examine the state's education system, including early learning. On January 17, 2006, initial funders signed a memorandum of understanding outlining a four-month planning process. By May 2006, the organization was incorporated as a state nonprofit corporation and an initial board of directors and steering committee were established. Thrive by Five Washington was built on the infrastructure of the Early Care and Education Coalition (EC²), a smaller public-private partnership, and operated under the fiscal sponsorship of the Foundation for Early Learning until the partnership received its tax exempt status in June 2006.

Governance

Thrive by Five Washington is governed by a board of directors composed of funding partners and policymakers. The partnership is co-chaired by Governor Gregoire and Bill Gates Sr. Graciela Italiano-Thomas became its president and chief executive officer in January 2007, and she has been working with the board and an advisory committee representing diverse communities and expertise to develop a strategic plan, establish operational capacity, and begin program development and funding.

How the Partnership Relates to or Operates within the Context of the State System. The state is a member of Thrive by Five's board of directors and steering committee and contributes funds and expertise to the partnership. Governor Gregoire serves as a nonvoting co-chair of the board of directors. She is joined, also in a nonvoting capacity, by the director of the state's new Department of Early Learning and the superintendent of public instruction. Four voting state legislators—one from each caucus (Republican and Democrat) and one from each house—serve on the board.

Thrive by Five Washington and the state are now partnering on these activities:

- Broad community investment in East Yakima and White Center to demonstrate delivery of high-quality,

home-based early learning and child care quality improvement approaches;

- Development, funding, and connection of programs under three promising models, including culture of literacy, nurturing families, and school connections;
- Continued work coordinating 10 community Born Learning campaigns;
- Development of additional cultural adaptations for the state early learning and development benchmarks and appropriate assessments;
- The mapping of early learning data, processes, and resources; and
- Coordination of early learning professional development components.

Relationship Between Thrive by Five Washington and Localities. In this first year of operations, Thrive by Five Washington is funding two demonstration communities (see section on Funding) and continuing the former Early Care and Education Coalition's coordination of 10 local partnerships that are implementing Born Learning campaigns. The campaigns aim to educate parents and build public understanding of the importance of high-quality early learning.

Funding

Thrive by Five Washington's funding partners recognize that a strategically coordinated mix of public and private dollars will yield the greatest impact for the state's youngest children. Working together, funding partners will earmark dollars through pooled and aligned investments designed to create increased leverage for program and system alignment. They also will encourage local buy-in and investment. Pooled funding is money that funding partners co-invest through Thrive by Five Washington to achieve common outcomes and the greatest impact. Aligned funding is money that is independently invested by partners working toward these shared outcomes.

Thrive by Five Washington's FY 2008 budget is slightly more than \$13 million. Multiyear commitments have been secured for future operations and grant making with commitments, ranging from one year to six years. Recently hired development staff members are working to increase the current donor base of 22 institutional donors and 3 individual donors.

Activities

Thrive by Five Washington invests in parenting and community education, the integrated home-based early learning and child care quality improvement activities described earlier, promising models, and statewide system-building efforts. Activities are focused on creating the momentum necessary to create quantum improvements in public policy and funding. The organization, its partners, grantees, and communities work together and learn together, leveraging public, private, and community resources to create lasting social change and contribute to the knowledge base of the national early learning movement.

- *A parenting and community education campaign* provides parents and caregivers with easy-to-understand, practical advice and support to assist them during the first five years of their child's life as well as increases public support for early learning resources, programs, and appropriate policies and helps create demand for high-quality services. Born Learning Washington, which is affiliated with the national Born Learning Campaign, consists of 10 locally led campaigns and a statewide effort of more than 25 statewide organization partners. The campaign includes airing radio and cable television public service announcements, contributing news stories and editorials to major local papers, and distributing Born Learning and partner organizations' materials in English and Spanish.
- *Thrive community investments* in two communities build on existing efforts to create a coordinated network of high-quality early learning that includes expanded home-based support services, such as home visiting, literacy, and family support programs; expanded parenting and community education; and the building of a model child care center that provides support programs for families and technical assistance and learning opportunities for child care providers. In addition, the state will be working in the same two communities to pilot a quality rating and improvement system to improve the quality of licensed child care and offer information to help parents make informed choices.
- *Promising model investments* test, connect, and validate effective programs, helping to build knowledge about what works for children and families and broaden acceptance and buy-in of early learning across the state.



- *Statewide infrastructure investments* strengthen Washington's early learning infrastructure, create systems change, and build knowledge. Grants funded in this area support the effective delivery of services, adoption of useful policies, and consistent delivery of high-quality opportunities for children at home or in care settings.

Evaluation

The Bill & Melinda Gates Foundation, a charter Thrive by Five Washington partner, has contracted with Mathematica Policy Research and the University of Washington to conduct a long-term evaluation of the effects of the work in the Thrive communities. Evaluation will include the tracking of child and parent outcomes and a small, focused, longitudinal study. A series of studies and reports are planned between 2008 and 2016. Evaluation methodologies for other program activities are under development.

NOTES

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4. Bruner, Floyd, and Copeman.
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37. The funding could be used, for example, to develop a governance structure, conduct strengths and needs assessments, prepare strategic and action plans, implement a public awareness campaign, provide mentoring to communities within the collaborative, develop infrastructure, and participate in accountability and evaluation efforts required by the Early Childhood Investment Corporation as well as in corporation-provided technical assistance and training. Infrastructure includes financing, governance, data collection and analysis, quality assurance, service coordination, communication, accountability, monitoring, and personnel development.
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59. The Born Learning Campaign is a joint initiative of the United Way of America, United Way Success By 6[®], Civitas, the Families and Work Institute, and the Ad Council.

NGA CENTER DIVISIONS

The Center is organized into five divisions with some collaborative projects across all divisions.

- **Education** provides information on early childhood, elementary, secondary, and postsecondary education, including teacher quality, high school redesign, reading, access to and success in postsecondary education, extra learning opportunities, and school readiness.
- **Health** covers a broad range of health financing, service delivery and policy issues, including containing health care costs, insurance coverage trends and innovations, state public health initiatives, obesity prevention, Medicaid and long-term care reforms, disease management, health information technology, health care quality improvement, and health workforce challenges.
- **Homeland Security & Technology** supports the Governors Homeland Security Advisors Council and examines homeland security policy and implementation, including public health preparedness, public safety interoperable communications, intelligence and information sharing, critical infrastructure protection, energy assurance, and emergency management. In addition, this unit assists governors in improving public services through the application of information technology.
- **Environment, Energy & Natural Resources** analyzes state and federal policies affecting energy, environmental protection, air quality, transportation, land use, housing, homeownership, community design, military bases, cleanup and stewardship of nuclear weapons sites, and working lands conservation.
- **Social, Economic & Workforce Programs** focuses on policy options and service delivery improvements across a range of current and emerging issues, including economic development, workforce development, employment services, criminal justice, prisoner reentry, and social services for children, youth, and low-income families.



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