StateTAResources elcta

Transformation Zones – an Early Learning Improvement Strategy

This resource was prepared in response to a request from a Race to the Top – Early Learning Challenge (RTT-ELC) State for information about the Transformation Zones that 10 RTT-ELC States had included as key projects in their RTT-ELC plans. This information will be helpful to other States as they consider how to continue to increase the quality of early learning by providing targeted resources to the communities where the children and families with the highest needs live.

Geographic areas where States concentrate funding and technical assistance services to support strategic systems-level work have been called achievement zones, community hubs, early childhood hubs, empowerment zones, innovation zones, investment zones, promise communities, and transformation zones. For this discussion, they will be referred to as transformation zones. These zones are well-defined and limited in size. In general, they are areas the size of one or more counties or school districts.

This resource includes a description of transformation zones, information about local implementation teams, a list key issues for States to consider, and lessons learned from States as they have implemented transition zones. The Appendix, State Examples, gives specific State examples about the criteria RTT-ELC States used to select communities and the services States and communities are providing.

ELC TA reviewed individual State websites and resource, RTT-ELC Applications, and the 2013 and 2014 RTT-ELC Annual Performance Report data that the RTT-ELC Grantees submitted to the Department of Education and the Department of Health and Human Services in the spring of 2014 and 2015. Individual State APRs are posted at https://elc.grads360.org/#program/annual-performance-reports.

Description: Improving Program Quality Through Targeted Investments

A primary purpose of the RTT-ELC program is to close educational gaps for children with high needs by improving early learning and development programs. Many of these children live in communities, both urban and rural, that are characterized by high levels of poverty and inadequate resources.

To improve outcomes for these children, 10 RTT-ELC States (**Georgia, Illinois, Maryland, Massachusetts, Minnesota, New Mexico, North Carolina, Oregon, Pennsylvania,** and **Vermont**) (figure 1) are investing resources and supports to transform targeted geographic areas that have a significant

Transformation Zones

number of children with high needs. This approach is modeled on the success of programs such as the Harlem Children's Zone and Promise Neighborhoods. The approach recognizes that change requires collaboration among local stakeholders as well as intensive, significant, long-term investment.

States have created transformation zones for multiple, inter-related purposes. They allow States to:

- maximize limited resources by investing them in areas where they can be expected to have the greatest impact.

- develop or strengthen a community's capacity to effectively implement programs that can be sustained beyond the life of the RTT-ELC grant.

- gain a better understanding of the challenges of early childhood systems-building efforts in under-resourced communities so they can be more effectively addressed.

- support inter-agency work at the State level.

- build capacity for providing high-quality early learning experiences across the State by coordinating efforts at the State-level and addressing policies and procedures that can create barriers to local implementation.

- pilot changes in State policies, programs, and practices to determine which changes to recommend for more wide-spread adoption. The results of these pilots can be used to drive data-based decision-making at the State level when sufficient funding is available.

Key tenets of transformation zone initiatives are local support, capacity building, and accountability for outcomes. States provide State-level leadership and a variety of services, including technical assistance and incentives (figure 2).

Figure 2. Key tenets of transformation zone initiatives

Implementation Teams

The local implementation team is the focal point for transformation of a community. It makes the systems-level decisions about how to "transform" the community to integrate and improve the local infrastructure of high-quality early learning programs and related services. This work allows the local programs to provide services for young children and their families more effectively and efficiently.

The implementation team is based on consensus building where all members have a voice and are represented. Team members represent key stakeholders in the community who have the authority to make key decisions about policy and practices. A team generally has representatives from local

education agencies, health and family services agencies, community organizations, institutions of higher education, private philanthropic groups, and business leaders. A successful team:

- Builds trust

- Has a commitment to common principles and goals

- Uses data to inform how those goals will be achieved

- Communicates the plan's progress regularly to both internal and external stakeholders.

Local implementation teams in the 10 RTT-ELC States oversee the following types of coordinated services, which may vary from community to community:

- Support for early learning and development programs to improve their Tiered Quality Rating and Improvement System (TQRIS)[1] ratings

- Economic development initiatives to attract high-quality early learning and development programs into the TQRIS

- Incentives to redirect Title I funds into State-funded preschool programs

- Quality improvement grants

- Enhanced child care subsidy payments

- Coordinated home visiting

- Health care consultation

- Family engagement grants

- Specialized professional development

- Screening, assessment, and referrals

- Leveraging additional funding

Key Issues for States to Consider

As States have designed transformation zones, they have addressed three key issues: criteria for selecting transformation zones, State support to local implementation teams, and evaluation.

---

[1] For the RTT-ELC grant, a Quality Rating and Improvement System (QRIS) is referred to as a Tiered Quality Rating and Improvement System (TQRIS). This distinction highlights the importance of common standards and levels across all types of publicly funded early learning and development systems statewide and meaningful differences among the quality levels of a system.

Criteria RTT-ELC States Used To Select Transformation Zones

To determine which geographic areas could benefit most from targeted support, States looked at documented high levels of concentrated need and willingness of the community to work together. Some States also considered geographic diversity. The following table shows examples of criteria States used for deciding which localities among the many eligible localities to designate a transformation zone. The State tables at the end of this document have more specific information about which criteria each 10 RTT-ELC State chose.

Criteria for Selecting Transformation Zones	
Element	**Examples of Criteria for Selecting Transformation Zones**
Documented high level of concentrated need	• Overall poverty rate • Percentage of children not reaching specific education standards • Percentage of children born to teen parents or to parents with a low education level • Percentage of children who are Dual Language Learners • The current capacity of the preschool programs to serve children
Willingness of the community to work together	• History of collaboration within the community • Capacity to provide services as evidenced by an already-existing infrastructure • Experience with being accountable for outcomes and for a return on investment
Location criteria	• Distribution between urban and rural • Existing Gateway Communities • Rural

Sources: Individual RTT-ELC 2014 APRs and State websites

Once the criteria were defined, four States (**Illinois, Maryland, Minnesota,** and **New Mexico)** invited specific areas to become transformation zones based on recognition of need. In six States (**Georgia, Massachusetts, North Carolina, Oregon, Pennsylvania,** and **Vermont**), selection was determined by the results of a competitive application process.

In **Oregon,** 2013 legislation created the Early Learning Division within the Oregon Department of Education. This placed all Early Learning and Development Programs under one agency and codified the transformation of the delivery system through the establishment of Early Learning Hubs. The first round of 12 Early Learning Hubs were selected in 2014. Four more Hubs were added in 2015. Communities defined their own Hub regions, but HB 2013 empowered the Early Learning Council to alter the lines of territory served by Hubs to ensure that all children in Oregon are served by an Early Learning Hub. The 16 Early Learning Hubs now cover the entire territory of the State.

Support Services States Provide to Transformation Zones

Examples of State-level support include:

Assigning State-level Staff

- In **Georgia**, the Department of Early Care and Learning (DECAL) hired a **Business Operations Specialist** who connected with participating State agencies to identify important next steps in establishing local economic incentive packages to encourage high-quality child care programs to either expand or open in the zones.

- Pennsylvania hired a **Community Innovation Zone (CIZ) Grant Manager** in 2014 to help further develop the infrastructure needed to adequately support the CIZs.

- **Vermont** hired a **Promise Community Director** to help partners work collaboratively to serve children and families as effectively as possible.

Centralizing Resources and Information

- The **Massachusetts** Department of Early Education and Care partnered with a private non-profit organization to create the Birth Through Third Grade Learning Hub **website** to share information about the alignment initiatives being conducted locally and nationally, share promising practices, and highlight relevant research.

- **Oregon** hosted with **webinars** for Early Learning Hubs about programs they are tasked with coordinating; developed an Early Learning Hub **workbook**; offered **data sets and maps** to help with planning; and provided **information** about policy, legislation, and State rules related to Early Learning Hubs.

- In **Vermont**, the Child Development Division developed a ***Promise Communities Handbook*** to support understanding of the initiative.

Providing Leadership Training Across Transformation Zones

- In **Massachusetts, New Mexico**, and **Vermont,** RTT-ELC funding supports **leadership academies** and **round tables** community team members gain leadership skills and a deeper knowledge and understanding of the landscape of early childhood issues in their communities**.**

- **Minnesota** holds quarterly meetings with the Transformation Zones to communicate progress on grant activities, receive feedback on implementation, and work collaboratively to resolve challenges across Transformation Zones and within a specific Transformation Zone.

Offering Technical Assistance

- **Georgia** hired **community coordinators** to help implement Early Childhood Empowerment Zones initiatives.

- For the communities that received initial funding, the **Massachusetts** Department of Early Education and Care partnered with a **private non-profit organization to provide guiding support** to new grantees as they began to implement their projects.

- In **Minnesota** and **North Carolina**, **Child Care Health Consultants** assist child care providers and quality coaches in Transformation Zones with health and safety questions. Consultants provided training to child care staff, parents, and children on topics such as emergency preparedness, food safety, and oral health.

- In **Minnesota**, three Transformation Zones use **Early Childhood Family Education Parent Educators** to work with local family, friend, and neighbor providers.

- **New Mexico** provides Early Childhood Investment Zones with **enhanced consultation** and support to the training and technical assistance system that works with home visiting and State-funded pre-Kindergarten programs.

- **North Carolina** hired **Literacy Coordinators** in all four Transformation Zone Counties to support the installation of both Motheread and Reach Out and Read, and each county identified supports necessary to ensure that their Literacy Coordinator is successful.

- The **Pennsylvania**, **Coordinators provide fiscal oversight** to the Community Investment Zones. **Pre-K Counts Specialists offer programmatic assistance** such as developing work plans and accessing resources.

- **Vermont** hired three regional **Promise Community Coaches** who provide two years of intensive technical assistance in asset mapping, needs assessment, strategic planning, and implementation.

- **Vermont** offered communities a series of **training and technical assistance incentives** to encourage them to participate as Promise Communities. These include training and support in the use of common frameworks such as the Results Based Accountability model, the Strengthening Families Framework, and the American Academy of Pediatrics Bright Futures guide.

Providing Fiscal Support
- In **Georgia,** each E³Z will receive approximately **$1.2 million in targeted resources.**

- **Massachusetts** provides Birth to Grade Three Alignment Grants **of** up to **$100,000** a year.

- **Pennsylvania** awarded Early Childhood Community Innovation Zone Grantees up to **$75,000** a year for three years to strengthen and implement strategies within their communities to help reduce the achievement gap by grade three.

- **Vermont** offers seed money of up to **$200,000** per community for strategic investments identified in the Promise Communities Plan.

Evaluating the Effectiveness of Transformation Zone Initiatives

RTT-ELC States have established strategies to guide implementation and evaluation of their transformation zone initiatives. Some examples include:

- **Georgia** and **North Carolina** are using the **Implementation Science Framework,**[2] an approach that provides a systematic method for studying, documenting, and assessing the effectiveness of the specific activities, strategies, and implementation processes. This approach can help States build both State and local capacity to effectively increase policy and practice alignment and develop and/or refine early childhood strategies across the State.

  In **North Carolina**, the Transformation Zone evaluation will address the following questions:

    o Have communities been able to enhance their capacity to improve the quality of their early childhood systems? How?
    o What State and local level policy and practice changes in the early childhood system have occurred as the result of the work in the transformation zone?
    o How have the participating State agencies or local communities strengthened the infrastructure to support the successful implementation of evidence-informed practice?
    o What are the benefits of the work in the transformation zone?
    o What are the unintended consequences?
    o If system change has or has not occurred or has been limited, what are the factors influencing this?

- **Illinois** has engaged **University of Illinois researchers** to conduct an evaluation that will measure the impact of work done in its Innovation Zones. The research findings will allow communities and the State to identify the components and activities within each zone that lead to the greatest impact.

- Communities that receive **Massachusetts**' Birth to Grade Three Community Implementation/ Planning Grants are required to have a **plan to show that data are collected, aggregated, and utilized** to ensure the collective goal of continuous improvement.

- The **Minnesota** Department of Education contracted with SRI International to conduct an annual evaluation of two of Minnesota's access strategies, Early Learning Scholarships (RTT-ELC Scholarships) and Title I Pre-K Incentives in the Transformation Zones. The annual evaluations examine information on planning and activities; early successes and challenges; and impacts on children, families, and early learning development programs. Key objectives for the evaluation include:

---

[2] Implementation Science is the systematic study of specified activities designed to put into practice activities or programs of known dimensions. In States using implementation science, the States work with transformation zones to build purposeful, active, effective implementation practices and to develop and use new skills and approaches to effectively implement a set of early childhood strategies. For additional information about Implementation Science, see the National Implementation Research Network's definition, http://nirn.fpg.unc.edu/learn-implementation/implementation-defined

- o Describing and analyzing the effectiveness of the implementation of the RTT-ELC Scholarships and the Title I Pre-K Incentives by studying the Models of Community Collaboration and Innovation employed.
  - o Describing the use of the RTT-ELC Scholarship and Title I Pre-K funds to increase access and meet the needs of families.
  - o Examining the extent to which access to high-quality early learning development programs has increased for children with high needs.
  - o Describing family engagement with the RTT-ELC Scholarships and the Title I PreK Incentives, including the effectiveness of outreach methods on influencing family decision-making about early learning and development programs for their children.
  - o Examining the impact of the RTT-ELC Scholarships and Title I PreK Incentives on child outcomes, specifically school readiness.

- In **Oregon,** a Hub Metrics Committee developed a set of revisions to the accountability metrics for Early Learning Hubs. These metrics include:
  - o Increase in percentage of children receiving a child care subsidy in a 3, 4 or 5 tier TQRIS program.
  - o Increase in number of TQRIS providers serving "hot spots" and communities of color.
  - o Increase in percent of children who receive a developmental screen before the age of three.
  - o Increase in Kindergarten Assessment scores in each domain by demographic group.

Lessons Learned: Transformation is Hard Work

The experiences of the 10 RTT-ELC States that are already implementing transformation zones make it clear that transformation is difficult work and requires thoughtful planning and dedicated implementation. As other States plan transformation zones, they can benefit from the experiences and lessons offered by these 10 RTT-ELC States.

In a 2014 review of its transformation zone project, North Carolina outlined the following lessons learned and factors for other States to consider:

- Assess readiness, capacity, and interest of State and county actors to engage in system change and professional development efforts. Expect variations in levels of readiness, capacity, and interest, and work with the most interested partners.

- Provide adequate planning time for State and county actors to define the vision for their early childhood system and to develop a shared understanding of the purpose, goals, and process of the system change effort and the fit of proposed strategies.

- Allow time for county and State exploration to identify an appropriate strategy for implementation by assessing need and fit. The assessment of need and fit should be well integrated with and/or be part of the development of a county action plan for the early childhood system and community building efforts.

- Select one "scale-worthy" strategy (rather than 10) to implement in a transformation zone.

- Provide time and training for county stakeholders to conduct a scan of their current system and develop an action plan, including how to support the engagement of diverse voices, to support their vision for their early childhood system.

- Revisit frequently the systems change purpose, goals, and process with all actors (from initiative leaders to technical assistance providers and county teams) to ensure shared understanding.

- Engage influential and knowledgeable people at all levels, including leaders who have influence over policy and funding decisions, as well as managers and stakeholders who understand local culture/processes/procedures.

- Engage an evaluation team and begin monitoring processes at the start of the initiative to support collection of critical information, help establish measurable accomplishments, and provide appropriate feedback to leaders.

- Ensure transparency – make information and the system change process available, accessible, and inclusive of actors at both county and State levels.

- Try to build on existing infrastructure/teams rather than creating new ones. When establishing new teams/infrastructure, allow time for the team to effectively work together (i.e. consider the group development model of forming – storming – norming – performing).[3] Engage leaders in concrete, actionable work early in the process.

- Engage change experts. Providing external assistance is necessary to lead collaborators through the change process and to support individuals and agencies navigating new ways of doing business.

- Create multi-agency contracts (and/or MOAs) at the State-level with participating local agencies to ensure agencies understand their roles in the transformation zone and their joint ownership and responsibility for implementing strategies.

- Consider boundaries/county lines and the local approach to service provision. Implementing a multi-county/regional initiative can be challenging without an existing regional infrastructure to support implementation.

- Be sensitive when integrating new services into existing services and ensure partners do not feel threatened, especially if the existing services generate county revenue.

---

[3] The Forming – Storming – Norming – Performing model of group development was first proposed by Bruce Tuckman in 1965.

Interviews with leaders in other RTT-ELC States revealed additional lessons learned from efforts to support Transformation Zones:

- **Data collection** is a complex task and is often new to individual programs and to Transformation Zone collaborators. To have valid research findings, programs and collaborators need training and support on collecting reliable and complete data. There should be clarity and shared understanding of the key policy questions that need to be answered by early childhood data efforts. States should develop a strategic plan for increasing data integration across early childhood programs and the early learning system.

- The development of efficient **feedback processes** between State and local partners, including a transparent system for sharing data across counties, regions, and the State is time-consuming and challenging.

- Transformation zone implementation teams must be **adequately funded** in order for them to fulfill their coordination function.

- Communities that lack the capacity to plan for, implement, or sustain high-quality programming that will prepare children for kindergarten entry may opt out of participating in State initiatives and opportunities such as home visiting and State-funded prekindergarten. **Capacity building** must be a priority for the State-level Transformation Zones Implementation Team and partners in such communities. Strategies designed to engage local stakeholders in the development of infrastructures to support high-needs communities can include developing tools and implementing skill development opportunities such as Leadership Academies, round tables, and coordination with community coalitions.

> **LEGISLATIVE RECOMMENDATIONS**
>
> *The Oregon Early Learning Hub Report to the Legislature prepared in 2015 by the Oregon Early Learning Division has specific recommendations for legislation to increase the effectiveness and successfulness of early learning hubs.*

- Many transition zone communities lack of sufficient access to health care, behavioral health care, and family support services. The State must engage State-level agency leaders to address these local challenges.

- Early childhood professionals are accustomed to thinking about program-level outcomes. States need to develop strategies to help them build a systems-level perspective and skills in collaboration for community impact.

- At the State-level, it is important to have a staff member who is dedicated to system development work and to have State leaders commit time to this effort.

- Implementation teams cannot be dependent on only one strong leader as it is often challenging to sustain efforts if that leader leaves the team.

- Consensus building is a time consuming process. It is important to plan time for building consensus; otherwise stakeholder disagreements that are not addressed can derail the progress.

- Sustainability planning needs to be part of the process from the beginning.[4] Leadership, consensus building, conflict resolution, and decision-making skills are important in ensuring sustainability

- Balancing State, regional, and local interests, priorities, and needs requires individual stakeholders to develop internal communication protocols and processes for shared decision-making.

- Finding consensus on a viable administrative "home" for each component of a transformation zone initiative and for sustainability efforts can be difficult because of conflicting interests or lack of resources.

Summary

Ten RTT-ELC States are investing in transformation zones as an innovative strategy to improve the quality of early learning and development programs and to close educational gaps for children with high needs by improving the communities where these children live.

Key tenets of transformation zone initiatives are local support, capacity building, and accountability for outcomes. States chose specific transformation zones based on both the existence of significant risk factors in those communities that jeopardize children's healthy development and learning and the expectation that the local implementation teams were capable of making systems-level changes. States provide State-level leadership and a variety of services, including technical assistance and incentives to support these local implementers.

While RTT-ELC States have made substantial progress in implementing transformation zone initiatives, many have described challenges associated with this work. These States are learning lessons about selecting communities, relying on local implementation teams, supporting the transformation zone initiatives, and effective evaluation practices that will help other States invest resources and supports to transform the localities where children with high needs grow up. As future States approach this work, they can benefit from the experiences of these 10 States.

---

[4] For additional information about sustainability see the Early Learning Challenge Technical Assistance (ELC TA) program's Sustainability web page at https://elc.grads360.org/#communities/sustainability

Resources

Selected State Resources

- [Georgia's Early Education Empowerment Zones](#) [webpage]

- [Illinois ECAP Collaborative. Innovation Zone Evaluation Reports](#) [webpage]

- [Illinois Race to the Top – Early Learning Challenge Innovation Zones](#) [webpage]

- [Partner Plan Act: Innovation Zones](#) [Illinois Action for Children webpage]

- [Innovation Zones](#) [Illinois Action for Children PowerPoint]

- [*Children Served by Innovation Zones*](#). College of Education at Illinois, 2015.

- [Maryland Family Network. Two Baltimore City Family Support Centers to Become RTT Community Hubs](#) [newsletter]

- Massachusetts: [Birth Through Third Grade Learning Hub RTT-ELC](#) [website]

- [*Evaluation for Minnesota's Race to the Top-Early Learning Challenge Funds to Promote Access to High-Quality Programs: Year 1 Annual Report*](#). SRI International, 2013.

- [Minnesota RTT-ELC Year 1 and Year 2 Zones Evaluation Reports](#) [webpage]

- [*New Mexico Selection Criteria EC Investment Zones: Risk Factors Map*](#). New Mexico Health, Children, Youth and Families Department and the Public Education Department, 2013.

- [New Mexico Project 3: Investment Zones](#) [webpage]

- [New Mexico Early Childhood Investment Zone Community Profiles](#) [webpage]

- [North Carolina RTT-ELC Transformation Zones](#) [webpage]

- [North Carolina RTT-ELC Transformation Zone Evaluation](#) [webpage]

- [Early Learning Challenge Transformation Zone](#). North Carolina Early Childhood Advisory Council. [Webinar], 2012.

- [Oregon Early Learning Hubs](#) [webpage]

- [*Pennsylvania Community Innovation Zones Request for Applications*](#). Office of Child Development and Early Learning, 2014.

- [*An Inquiry into Pennsylvania's Keystone STARS: Research Report*](#). University of Pennsylvania, 2015.
- [Vermont Promise Communities Invitation Overview](#) [You Tube Webinar]

- [Vermont's Early Learning Challenge: Promising Communities](#) [fact sheet]

Websites for Other Transformation Zone Initiatives

- [Promise Neighborhoods](#) (U.S. Department of Education)

- [Promise Neighborhoods Research Consortium](#) (National Institute on Drug Abuse)

- [Promise Zones](#) (U.S. Department of Housing and Urban Development)

- [Harlem Children's Zone](#)

Additional Resources

- *2013 RTT-ELC Annual Performance Reports* for Phase 1 and Phase 2 States and *2014 RTT-ELC Annual Performance Reports* for Phase 1, Phase 2, and Phase 3 States are available at
https://elc.grads360.org/#program/annual-performance-reports

- *Playbook for Becoming an Early Learning Community*. The White House, 2014.
https://www.whitehouse.gov/sites/default/files/docs/playbook_for_becoming_an_early_learning_community.pdf

- Kauerz, Kristia, and Julia Coffman. *Framework for Planning, Implementing, and Evaluating PreK-3rd Grade Approaches*. College of Education, University of Washington, 2012.
http://depts.washington.edu/pthru3/PreK-3rd_Framework_Legal%20paper.pdf

APPENDIX: State Examples

The following 10 State tables provide a summary of the selection criteria, areas served, and examples of services provided to Transformation Zones by the State or of services provided by transformation zones to their communities. Information for this document was gathered from the 2013 and 2014 RTT-ELC Annual Performance Reports, RTT-ELC applications, and State websites and resources.

GEORGIA Early Education Empowerment Zones (E3Zs)

Sources: Georgia 2014 APR; Georgia's Early Education Empowerment Zones [website]

Selection Criteria and Areas Served	Examples of Services Provided to Zones or Services Provided by Zones

Georgia selected four zones: one large metropolitan county, one zone containing a mid-sized city, and two rural zones composed of several counties. Each contains approximately 10,000 children living in conditions of high need.
 	
Selection criteria included: PAGE 8
 	
• Primary Selection Indicators:
   o 3rd grade Criterion-Referenced Competency Test (CRCT) scores
   o Percentage of enrollment filled by children who receive Childcare and Parent Services (CAPS) subsidies
   o Overall poverty rate
   o Percentage of births to females with less than a 12th grade education
   o Percentage of eligible child care programs participating in Quality Rated, Georgia's tiered quality rating system for child care providers
 	
• Secondary Selection Indicators:
   o Free and reduced meal eligibility rate
   o Percentage of children with a home language other than English
   o Premature birth rate
   o Lottery-funded Pre-K saturation rate
   o Percentage of programs with 2- or 3-stars in Georgia's tiered quality rating system
 	
• "Non-quantifiable" factors included
   o Perceived capacity of technical college or university to incorporate/expand early education instruction and support
   o Ability for Head Start/Early Head Start collaboration
   o Current or potential for a robust home visiting program
   o Level of participation in Quality Rated
   o Local foundation and business support
   o The ability of the zone to offer Georgia's Pre-K in a variety of settings.
	Overall, each E3Z will receive approximately $1.2 million.
	
	State and E3Z services include:
	
	• Enhanced child care subsidy payments and a push to have 100 percent of child care programs participating in Quality Rated (Georgia's TQRIS)
	
	• Specialized professional development for early childhood educators
	
	• Screening, assessment, and referrals to promote child development
	
	• Non-competitive family engagement grants and training designed to increase the knowledge and use of family engagement principles, strategies, and parenting support
	
	• Voluntary, center-based home visiting services coordinated through Great Start Georgia
	
	• Quality improvement grants for child care programs
	
	• Economic development incentives to attract high-quality early education programs
	
	• A Department of Early Care and Learning community coordinator to help implement initiatives

ILLINOIS Early Childhood Innovation Zones

Sources: *Illinois 2013 APR*; *Illinois 2014 APR*; Innovation Zones [webpage]; Illinois ECAP Collaborative [webpage]; Partner Plan Act: Innovation Zones [webpage]; Innovation Zones [PowerPoint]; *Children Served by Innovation Zones*

Selection Criteria and Areas Served	Examples of Services Provided to Zones or Services Provided by Zones

Illinois selected seven communities in 2013 and four in 2015. They include:
 	
• Altgeld-Riverdale (Chicago)
• Aurora
• Austin (Chicago)
• Cicero
• Elgin
• Englewood (Chicago)
• Greater East St. Louis
• North Lawndale (Chicago)
• Pilsen and Little Village (Chicago)
• Thornton Township (south suburbs of Cook County)
• Williamson County (Marion)
 	
Selection criteria included:
 	
• Level of concentrated need - The Illinois Early Learning Council defined priority categories as children:
   o with teen parents,
   o in homeless families,
   o who are linguistically isolated,
   o in family friend or neighbor care,
   o in families involved with Dept. of Children and Family Services,
   o with disabilities,
   o in families of poverty, or of migrant or seasonal workers.
   Zones can add their own categories as needed.
• Presence of providers with a demonstrated interest in quality improvement
• A history of collaboration among early education providers
• Strong local support for early learning
	Local collaborations identify and pilot strategies for increasing the number of highest-need children who are enrolled in high-quality early learning services. Goals include:
	
	• Serving more children from priority categories*
	• Improving program quality for programs serving children from priority categories
	• Supporting innovations in parent engagement for children from priority categories
	• Improving access to health and social services for children from priority categories

MARYLAND - Community Hubs	
Sources: *Maryland 2013 APR*; *Maryland 2014 APR*; *Two Baltimore City Family Support Centers to Become RTT Community Hubs*	
Selection Criteria and Areas Served	**Examples of Services Provided to Zones or Services Provided by Zones**
Maryland selected two Community Hubs in under-resourced communities in Baltimore City. • Cherry Hill • Park Heights	Community Hubs provide and coordinate existing services for families with children birth to age 5. They create a single platform in the community for services to pregnant women, children from birth to kindergarten and their families, and child care providers. Services include: • Traditional Family Support Center services • Parenting education • Health education and access to health care • Center-based and home-visiting programs. • Training programs for child care providers to enhance the quality of their child care programs and better prepare children to succeed in school. • Help to families to make a smooth transition to elementary school • Adult education • Facilitated access to services via transportation, meals, and non-traditional hours of operation.

MASSACHUSETTS - Birth to Grade Three Community Implementation/ Planning Grants

Sources: *Massachusetts 2013 APR; Massachusetts 2014 APR;* Birth Through Third Grade Learning Hub RTT-ELC [website]

Selection Criteria and Areas Served	Examples of Services Provided to Zones or Services Provided by Zones

Massachusetts has awarded Birth to Grade Three Community Alignment Grants to 12 Gateway Communities. In 2012, Massachusetts Department of Early Education and Care awarded grants to five high-need communities (Lowell, Boston, Springfield, Somerville, and Berkshire County/Pittsfield) In 2014, it awarded additional funding to these communities as well as to seven more communities (Cape Cod, Holyoke, Lawrence, New Bedford, North Adams/Northern Berkshires, and Worcester).
 	
Selection was via a competitive application process. Application criteria included:
• Applicants must be a collaborative community with a Birth to Third Grade infrastructure in place that can be the foundation for enhanced coordination and measured outcomes. Communities used the *Framework for Planning, Implementing, and Evaluating PreK-3rd Grade Approaches* to evaluate existing alignment in their communities.
• Priority was given to high-need communities defined as:
   o Gateway Communities
   o Communities with an established Family Resource Center
   o District with Level 4 Schools
   o Home Visiting Communities
   o Communities with Family Resource Centers with an Early Head Start/Head Start School Liaison and/or Communities that are part of the Campaign for Grade Level Reading Learning Network
 	
Massachusetts partnered with a private non-profit organization to document and analyze the early learning partnerships between public and private organizations. The Learning Hub has information about local and national initiatives that support children birth to grade.
	Massachusetts provides Birth to Grade Three Alignment Grants up to $100,000 a year.
	
	The focus of the grants was community specific. Initiatives to align birth through grade three learning that has happening in the 12 communities includes:
	• Sharing professional development.
	• Building local leadership.
	• Using common data-driven indicators.
	• Promoting family engagement.
	• Aligning standards, curriculum, and assessments.
	
	Examples of community alignment work include:
	• Boston: The RTT-ELC grant supported a coach/coordinator. Boston's project targeted 14 community-based classrooms.
	• Lowell: The RTT-ELC grant supported consultant/coaches.in two low-income neighborhoods. The team focused on improving quality through the QRIS process, school readiness, formative assessment, and family engagement.
	• Pittsfield: Boston: The RTT-ELC grant supported a coordinator. The community developed a strategic plan around family engagement, preschool participation, quality and alignment, and out-of-school time.
	• Somerville: The RTT-ELC grant supported a coordinator. Strategies included focusing on kindergarten readiness, literacy coaching, training in Teaching Strategies Gold, and engaging families.
	• Springfield: The RTT-ELC grant supported a coordinator/consultant. Strategies included curricular and assessment alignment, teacher and adult caregiver capacity/ quality, and data use and strategic planning.

MINNESOTA – Transformation Zones

Sources: *Minnesota 2013 APR*, *Minnesota 2014 APR*, *Evaluation for Minnesota's Race to the Top-Early Learning Challenge Funds to Promote Access to High-Quality Programs: Year 1 Annual Report* (2013); *Minnesota RTT-ELC Year 1 and Year 2 Zones Evaluation Reports* (for 2013 and 2014)

Selection Criteria and Areas Served	Examples of Services Provided to Zones or Services Provided by Zones
Minnesota selected four high-needs areas: • Itasca County (Rural) • Minneapolis' North Side Achievement Zone (Urban) • St. Paul's Promise Neighborhood (Urban) • White Earth (Indian Reservation) Selection criteria included: • Need for increased access to high-quality early learning and development programs • Existing resources and commitment to implement the RTT-ELC initiatives in a way that supports positive outcomes for children, families, and the communities • Geographic diversity Minnesota holds quarterly meetings with the Transformation Zones to communicate progress on grant activities, receive feedback on implementation, and work collaboratively to resolve challenges across Transformation Zones and within a specific Transformation Zone.	• Zones are providing intensive support to help providers achieve higher levels of quality and higher ratings in TQRIS. • Each Zone has adopted a model of to implement Minnesota's Early Learning Scholarships.These scholarships provide families with increased access to high-quality early learning and development programs. Local models met guidelines as provided by the Minnesota Department of Education and addressed the specific needs of the community. • Each Zone adopted local strategies to promote Minnesota's Title I Preschool Incentive Grants. These grants encourage school districts to direct Title I money into pre-K programming. Each Zone also developed outreach strategies to inform families and their communities about the availability of the Title I PreK Programs • Zones participated in pilot programs using online versions of the ASQ and ASQ-SE screening tools • Zones are using Child Care Health Consultation to assist child care providers and quality coaches with health and safety questions. Consultants provided training to child care staff, parents, and children on topics such as emergency preparedness, food safety, and oral health. • Three Zones are using Early Childhood Family Education parent educators to work with local Family, Friend and Neighbor Providers.

NEW MEXICO – Early Childhood Investment Zones

Sources: New Mexico 2013 APR, New Mexico 2014 APR, *New Mexico Selection Criteria EC Investment Zones* (2015) New Mexico Project 3: Investment Zones [webpage]; New Mexico Early Childhood Investment Zone Community Profiles

Selection Criteria and Areas Served	Examples of Services Provided to Zones or Services Provided by Zones
New Mexico identified 35 high-risk school districts, selected five as Early Childhood Investment Zones, and implemented activities in four targeted communities. Selection was based on a ranking of sociological and educational risk factors: - Adolescent births - Pre-term births - Infant mortality - Poverty - Juvenile arrest - Domestic violence - Inverse graduation rate - Unemployment - Child abuse, including neglect, physical abuse, psychological maltreatment, and sexual abuse - Percent of births to mothers who did not complete high school - Percent of all schools that DO NOT have a School-Based Health Center - Percent of female high school students that were NOT participants in GRADS Programs during 2010 - Percent of students who did not graduate 4 years after entering 9th grade , school year 2009-2010 - Percent of ALL students assessed who did not score proficient or above in combined Reading and Math Standard Based Assessment Tests, school year 2009-2010 - Percent of students receiving free or reduced priced meals, school year 2009-2010 - Percent of population 25 years and over without high school graduation - Percent of all schools that are Title I schools - Dollars expended on personnel salaries per pupil- all - Percent of elementary schools graded "D" or "F"	To support Investment Zones, New Mexico: - Developed a contract with University of New Mexico – Family Development Program to implement Early Childhood Neighborhood Leadership - Designed early childhood community-based leadership development. This model uses the "Mind in the Making" life skills as a framework for individual, team, and community collaborative leadership practice. - Given a weighted score to proposals submitted by agencies from Investment Zone communities or who are willing to provide early learning services in Investment Zone communities - Selected programs from Early Childhood Investment Zones to receive enhanced support through training and consultation (e.g., child care, PreK, home visiting) - Held a variety of meetings, trainings, and capacity development opportunities in communities within the Investment Zones.

NORTH CAROLINA – Transformation Zone

Sources: North Carolina 2013 APR; North Carolina 2014 APR; North Carolina Transformation Zones [Website] and Transformation Zone Evaluation

Selection Criteria and Areas Served	Examples of Services Provided to Zones or Services Provided by Zones
North Carolina selected four counties (Beaufort, Bertie, Chowan, and Hyde counties). To be eligible, counties had to be rural, geographically disparate, low-population density Tier 1* counties in northeastern North Carolina The application process used the following criteria: • A vision for the community that aligns with this initiative. • A history of collaboration across sectors and has reached consensus related to the "convening agency" for this initiative. • Committed leadership within each of the critical sectors of this initiative. • Experience of implementing evidence-based or evidence-informed early childhood strategies. • Willing and able to hire, re-direct funds, or re-design positions to engage three to five individuals (a minimum of .25 FTE each) to serve on the County Implementation Team. • Willing to participate in and contribute to a community of practice. • Willing to collect and use data related to the implementation, progress, and outcomes of this effort. *Tier 1 = the 40 most economically distressed counties according to NC Department of Commerce*	Each county has a full-time implementation coach (funded by the RTT-ELC grant) and systems-building support from Pennie Foster-Fishman (using the ABLe framework) targeted at engaging diverse parent voices. The Transformation Zone was designed to apply lessons from implementation science in order to build State and local capacity to effectively implement the selected early childhood strategies: • Early Literacy Initiative: supports county capacity to improve early literacy skills using selected Motheread, Inc. curricula and Reach Out and Read. • Child Care Health Consultation: promotes a regional coaching model to support local child care health consultants who provide technical assistance relating to child health and development in programs. • Family Connects: offers community-wide nurse home visiting for parents of newborns. • Positive Parenting Program (Triple P) is a parenting intervention program. Its main goal is to increase the knowledge, skills, and confidence of parents in order to reduce the prevalence of mental health, emotional, and behavioral problems in children. • Healthy Social Behavior Specialist: provides technical assistance and training based on the (CSEFEL) pyramid model to preschool classrooms. • The Infant-Toddler Expansion Grant: supports programs to implement high-quality early learning experiences for infants and toddlers resulting in the addition of 4- or 5-star infant-toddler slots. • NC Babies First: provides a part-day infant-toddler program in 4- and 5-star facilities designed to offer high-quality early learning experiences for infants and toddlers at-risk for developmental delays.

OREGON – Early Learning Hubs

Sources: Oregon 2013 APR; Oregon 2014 APR; Oregon Early Learning Hubs [website]; Oregon Individual Early Learning Hubs [website]; Oregon Early Learning Hubs [website]; Early Learning Hub Report to the Legislature (2015)

Selection Criteria and Areas Served	Examples of Services Provided to Zones or Services Provided by Zones
In 2013, the Oregon Legislature passed House Bill 2013. This authorized the Early Learning Council to create 16 regional and community-based Early Learning Hubs, which covers the State. The Early Learning Hubs are directed by statute to accomplish three specific goals: (1) create an early childhood system that is aligned, coordinated, and family-centered; (2) ensure that children arrive at school ready to succeed; and (3) ensure that Oregon's young children live in families that are healthy, stable, and attached. All Hubs are expected to reach readiness in 2015. Hubs were established in two rounds. The application process for the first six early learning hubs that received funding in the first round evaluated: • A defined service area and cross sector coordination including the presence of: • Target population and high-quality services for at-risk children and their families (as defined by Oregon Laws Chapter 37, section 12 [3]) including: • Business acumen and operational stability, and • Accountability for outcomes and a return on investment The territory covered by particular Hubs was not defined in statute. While communities were asked to define Hub regions on their own, HB 2013 empowered the Early Learning Council to alter the lines of territory served by Hubs to ensure that all children in Oregon are served by an Early Learning Hub.	Early Learning Hubs must: • Coordinate the provision of early learning services to the community served by the Hub. They are not to provide direct services. • Include service providers, parents, community members, county governments, school districts, and other stakeholders in the creation of the Hub • Align services coordinated by the Hub with the services provided by public schools • Align services coordinated by the Hub with services provided by Coordinated Care Organizations and county public health departments • Integrate efforts across health, K-12 education, human services, early education, and the business community using coordinated and transparent budgeting and through a governing body with representation of each of the above sectors as well as parents of children using early learning services • Demonstrate an ability to improve results for at-risk children • Leverage additional private and public funds • Keep administrative overhead at 15 percent or lower Technical Assistance tools and resources provided by Oregon's Early Learning Division for Early Learning Hubs includes links to • Webinars about programs Early Learning Hubs are tasked with coordinating • An Early Learning Hub workbook • Implementation and technical assistance resources for Early Learning Hubs • Data sets and maps to help with planning • Policy, legislation and state rules related to Early Learning Hubs

PENNSYLVANIA - Early Childhood Community Innovation Zones (CIZ) Grants

Sources: Pennsylvania 2014 APR; Early Childhood Education Community Innovation Zone Grants [webpage]
Pennsylvania Community Innovation Zones Request for Applications

Selection Criteria and Areas Served	Examples of Services Provided to Zones or Services Provided by Zones

Pennsylvania will award 50 grants to organizations, agencies, and school districts. Phase I of the grants was awarded in 2014 to 12 communities with exemplary innovations in place. The remaining 38 grants will be awarded in 2015.
 	
 The application process considered:
 	
 • High population of at-risk children from birth through 8-years-old. Risk is determined by:
    o Level of school performance as defined on the School Performance Profile (SPP)
    o School level percentage of English Language Learners as defined on SSP
    o School level percentage of children receiving special education services as defined on SPP
    o School level percentage of economically disadvantaged children as defined on SPP
    o School level performance of historically underperforming subgroup on 3rd grade reading PSSA as defined on SPP
    o School level performance of historically underperforming subgroup on 3rd grade math PSSA as defined on SPP
    o School level rate of attendance as defined on SSP
    o School district percentage of homelessness
    o School district level access to high-quality early care and education programming as defined in the OCDEL Reach and Risk Report
 • Ability to use funding to supplement or enhance an existing innovative program, activity, or strategy focusing on:
    o Strong relationships between early childhood programs and school districts to build birth–3rd grade alignment.
    o Family supports and engagement.
    o Network and coordination of community organizations that serve children and families with young children
	CIZs receive technical support and local grants of up to $75,000 a year for three years. Local grants supported plans for implementing strategies to
	
	 • Increase family supports and engagement. Each of the 12 grantees awarded in 2014 are implementing unique strategies to engage families, such as training parents to become leadership trainers for other parents and expanding a technology that allows children to send texts and photos to their parents while in preschool.
	
	 • Develop stronger relationships between early childhood programs and school districts to build birth to 3rd-grade alignment. Applicants were required to have a partnership between at least one early childhood education provider and school that will be serving the children in the target neighborhood. The applicants also agreed to implement the KEI in the target school in 2015.
	
	 • Strengthen the network of community organizations that serve families with young children.
	
	 • Increase appropriate use of developmental screening tools so children can receive the interventions they need as early as possible, and educators can adjust their instructional practices and program to best meet the children they serve
	
	 • Support the elementary school to assess every child at kindergarten entry using the Kindergarten Entry Inventory

VERMONT – Promise Communities
Sources: Vermont 2014 APR; About VT's Early Learning Challenge Grant; Webinar Vermont Promise Communities Invitation Overview [YouTube Webinar]; Vermont's Early Learning Challenge: Promising Communities [fact sheet]

Selection Criteria and Areas Served	Examples of Services Provided to Zones or Services Provided by Zones
Vermont will select 18-23 rural Supervisory Unions (multiple school districts). Seven were announced in April, 2015. Selection criteria include: • Data related to concentrated populations of children with high needs in rural areas of the State, including o Poverty o Disabilities o Open cases with the Department of Children and Families (DCF) Family Services Division o English Language Learners o Achievement gaps (performance measures include the Ready Kindergarteners Survey and Grade 3 standardized test scores) • Prioritized Supervisory Unions will be invited to apply to become a Promise Community and will have to organize a coalition of local partners to make the application. Priority will be given where local "buy in" is strongest.	Once the action plans are in place, grants up to $200,000 will be given to the community to support implementation efforts. In year one, Promise Community coaches will facilitate the development of each community's Promise Community Roadmap, which includes compiling a community needs assessment and creating an action plan to improve outcomes for children and families. The coaches will remain in the community during year two, providing technical assistance to move forward with the plan. An evaluator will continue to monitor long-term outcomes for the community. http://vtdigger.org/2015/04/05/first-seven-promise-communities-selected/ Promise Communities will receive human, information and financial resources to help them plan and work across sectors to improve the educational and developmental outcomes for children with high needs in their communities. Supports include: • Two years of intensive technical assistance in asset mapping, needs assessment, strategic planning, and implementation from Promise Community Coaches • Training and support in use of the common frameworks like the Results Based Accountability model, and the Strengthening Families Framework, and the AAP Bright Futures guide • Seed money for strategies and investments identified in the Promise Communities Plan