Idaho PDG Local Collaborative Guidebook

The Idaho Association for the Education of Young Children (Idaho AEYC) is in a unique position to support communities to not only address the challenges the current COVID-19 crisis highlights related to systems that support young children (ages birth through five years), but also to begin building a foundation that will be essential in the coming months and years.

This guidebook and subsequent tools/resources will support each collaborative's efforts to complete the following grant components:

1. Establish a local Early Learning Advisory Committee (ELAC) governance structure.
2. Conduct a local Early Learning Needs Assessment to determine current systems and resources in place.
3. Develop a local Early Learning Strategic Action Plan, based on the local needs assessment.
4. Identify and promote best practices to support transitions between early childhood and K-12 schools.

On behalf of the State of Idaho, Idaho AEYC has been awarded a federal Preschool Development Grant Birth through Five (PDG B-5) to support and enhance early childhood systems. Through this grant, the state is analyzing and building upon current systems to maximize parental choice, share best practices, and improve program quality with the goal of enhancing early learning systems statewide to improve literacy outcomes.

As part of the PDG B-5 grant, Idaho AEYC is working to accelerate the efforts of local collaboratives, modeled by the Preschool the Idaho Way Project, to bring together important local stakeholders to assess early learning systems, resources, and opportunities for families with young children (ages birth through five) in their community. In addition to Idaho AEYC, Advocacy & Communication Solutions, LLC (ACS) also will be providing technical assistance for each collaborative throughout this process.

Through the funding allocated for the PDG B-5 Early Childhood Local Collaborative grant project (PDG B-5 Activity 4.1), communities will assess their current mixed delivery system—a system of early childhood care and education services that are delivered through a combination of programs, providers, and settings, such as Head Start, licensed family and center-based child care programs, public schools, and other community-based organizations—supported by a combination of public and private funds. This process will begin in May 2020 with assistance, support, and guidance from Idaho AEYC and ACS.

As each collaborative begins this work, this guidebook is designed to be a road map for success, both in the short-term and in the long-term. Setting the foundation for success will increase the sustainability of this important work throughout Idaho's communities. Although every step of the process will be customized based on the unique needs of each collaborative, the guiding questions and major components of each step will be similar.

Part I:
Establishing a Local Early Childhood Care and Education Governance Structure

Each collaborative will be governed by an Early Learning Advisory Committee, which will be responsible for ensuring the local collaborative meets the grant deliverables. While the grant will be time limited (with possible renewal opportunities), it's important to keep in mind the long-term goal of increasing access to quality early childhood systems in your community and the unique opportunity that this grant presents to establish a foundation for years to come.

Early Learning Advisory Committee Participation

Effective advisory committees include individuals from various agencies, organizations, professions, and backgrounds who can contribute diverse perspectives and opinions to the shared vision of the community. When identifying advisory committee members, consider the long-term needs of your community, as well as the short-term objectives of the grant, to help ensure that you have the right participants to support sustainability.

To ensure the group remains successful in terms of efficient workflow, it is recommended that the Advisory Committee not exceed 10 members. At a minimum, the following participants need to be included in the Early Learning Advisory Committee:

► A representative from the lead fiscal agency/organization;

► A lead project manager;

► At least one early childhood educator working in a licensed/regulated child care, early learning, or preschool program;

► At least one representative from the local K-12 school district; and

► At least three community participants from a mix of public, private, nonprofit, government, health care, and civic organizations, such as:

- Child care/preschool programs, Head Start/Early Head Start, schools (public and private), libraries, community foundations, local businesses, tribal organizations, faith-based organizations, child welfare agency/organizations, civic organizations, (e.g., Volunteers of America, Big Brothers Big Sisters) community action centers, health care organizations, mental health providers/organizations, early intervention organizations, local government (e.g., mayor's office), parents, and other invested individuals.

Meeting Structure

The Early Learning Advisory Committee will meet at least four times from June through December 2020. These meetings can be in-person or virtual. A record of the meetings must be kept, including attendance, actions, and decisions of the committee.

As the committee is getting started, consider hosting a half-day meeting to make sure everyone has the same information and conversations about local issues can begin. To facilitate the first meeting, the following guiding questions may help you determine the committee's ongoing structure.

Guiding Questions for Advisory Committee Structure

As your collaborative is forming, consider the following questions about key elements of governance.

► Meeting structure (when, where, how)

1. When will meetings be scheduled (every week, every other week, other schedule)?

2. If possible, where will in-person meetings be held?
   - Is it beneficial to hold meetings in different locations to engage all participants?
   - If meetings are in different locations, does that make it more geographically challenging or friendly for members?

3. For virtual meetings, what platform/system will be used to ensure maximum committee member participation (e.g., Zoom, Skype, WebEx, GoToMeeting, Google Hangouts, Adobe Connect, Microsoft Teams)?

4. Do all committee members have access to reliable internet?

5. Do all committee members have reliable technology to join virtual meetings (smartphone, tablet, laptop, or other device)?

6. How will decisions be made (consensus, majority vote, other)?

7. How will a record of the meetings be kept (written summary, recorded audio)?

► Roles and participation

- While the committee may have a lead project manager, consider what other roles will need to be supported and who on the committee can fulfil those needs.

- What is the minimum number of participants required at each meeting in order to conduct business (quorum)?

- What is the best way to facilitate committee meetings?
  - Should the local project manager facilitate each meeting?
  - Is there a benefit to having someone different facilitate each meeting?
  - Should the committee consider bringing in a non-member third party to facilitate?

- Will committee members be required to sign a participant agreement form?

- How will the committee handle requests for participant substitutions? For example, if Joe Moe is invited to participate because of his role within an organization, are you comfortable with Joe asking another colleague to join in his place? Or did you select Joe for his specific expertise and personal connections?

> **Things to consider including in an agreement form:**
> attendance, participation, reviewing materials, substitution policy, etc.

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► **Decision-making structure**

1. How will committee decisions be made (e.g., consensus, simple majority, Equitable Decision Making, or other)?

2. How will the process for decision making affect participation, recruitment, and the ability to make decisions in a timely way to keep the project on schedule?

3. How will input be gathered from members who are unable to attend a meeting when important conversations are discussed and/or decisions are being made?

4. How/when will the committee seek additional feedback from community leaders, organizations, businesses, legislative representatives, and/or other invested target audiences or individuals?

Part II:
Conducting a Local Needs Assessment

The Advisory Committee is tasked with conducting a local needs assessment of early childhood care and education systems, resources, and related needs/gaps by the end of August 2020. This process begins by creating a list of data points/information that each collaborative wants to collect, followed by identifying sources for the information, and assigning individuals to locate and collect/input the information.

The following list of data points/information may be helpful as a place to start when determining what is important for each collaborative. Keep in mind the information needed may look different for each community, but the goal is to understand strengths, areas of improvement, and gaps so that the advisory committee can make informed decisions about how to move forward.

In addition to Idaho AEYC, ACS will support the advisory committee in determining the final set of needs assessment questions based on each collaborative's unique community.

> **It may be helpful to think about who needs to know why you are collecting this information.**
>
> Will there be questions or concerns for what is going to be done with the information? Who needs to be engaged early in the process to ensure they are supportive from the beginning?

Early Childhood Educators

► Number of early childhood educators (teachers, child care workers, child care directors, administrators, etc.) employed in child care, preschool, or any type of early learning program serving children ages birth through five years

► Number of volunteers in early childhood programs (such as non-paid parents, interns, family members, and more)

► Rate of pay for teachers, by role and setting

► Average number of hours worked per week, per educator/teacher and setting

► Role and number of early childhood educators with the following education levels:

a. High school diploma or GED

b. Early Childhood Certificate from an accredited institution of higher education

c. Child Development Associate Credential (CDA)

d. Associate degree (AA, AS)

e. Bachelor's degree (BA, BS, BECE)

f. Master's degree or higher

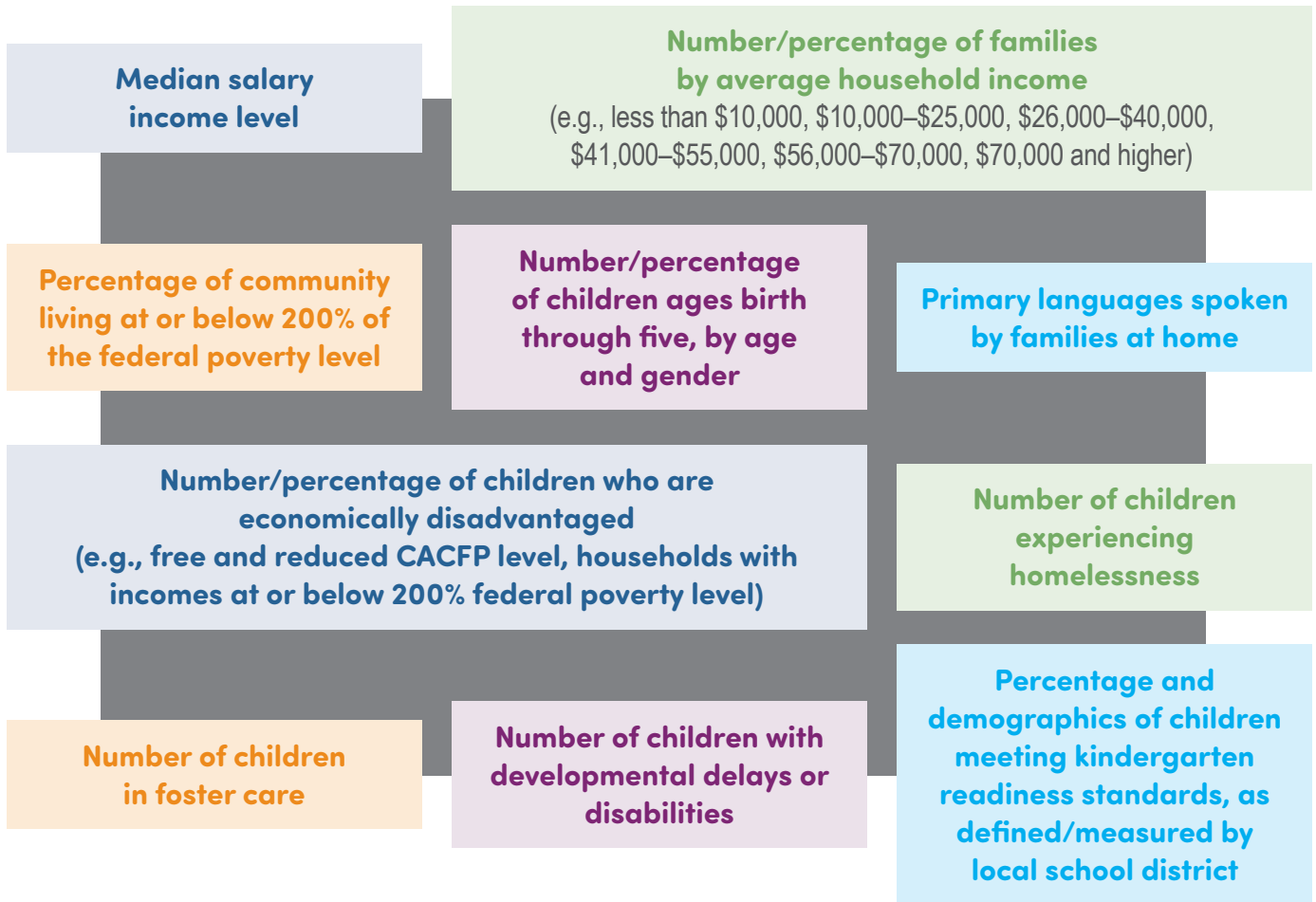Advocacy & Communication SOLUTIONS

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Service Information

Name and location of all child care programs
(regulated and non-regulated)

Regulatory status for each program
based on state laws and local regulations

Compliance and violation records
for each program

Number of spaces available for children, ages birth through 5, by age and setting
(e.g., family child care, home-based, school-based, center-based, preschool, Head Start/Early Head Start, Child Find, early intervention/special education)

Amenities provided (included in tuition) by each early learning program
(e.g., breakfast, snacks, lunch, diapers/wipes, sunscreen, transportation, extended hours, field trips, type of curriculum, child assessment system, parent-teacher conferences, secure online registration/payment portal, and more)

Hours of operation
for each early learning/child care program

Number/names of child care programs participating
in the USDA Child and Adult Care Food Program (CACFP)

Number/names of child care programs participating in Idaho's Steps to Quality (STQ)
and quality level of each program participating (Step 1 through Step 6)

Number/names of child care programs participating
in Idaho's Child Care (subsidy) Program (ICCP)

Number/names of child care programs that are nationally accredited
by NAEYC, AdvanceED, NECPA, NAC, NAFCC, and other established early childhood accreditation systems

Number/percentage of children in out-of-home care
when parents are working or attending school

Percentage of economically disadvantaged and Idaho Child Care Program qualified children
served by programs, by age and setting

Child/Family Information

Median salary income level

Number/percentage of families by average household income
(e.g., less than $10,000, $10,000–$25,000, $26,000–$40,000, $41,000–$55,000, $56,000–$70,000, $70,000 and higher)

Percentage of community living at or below 200% of the federal poverty level

Number/percentage of children ages birth through five, by age and gender

Primary languages spoken by families at home

Number/percentage of children who are economically disadvantaged
(e.g., free and reduced CACFP level, households with incomes at or below 200% federal poverty level)

Number of children experiencing homelessness

Number of children in foster care

Number of children with developmental delays or disabilities

Percentage and demographics of children meeting kindergarten readiness standards, as defined/measured by local school district

Part III:
Developing a Local Early Learning Strategic Action Plan

As part of the work of the advisory committee, each collaborative will complete a thoughtful, realistic local Strategic Action Plan that will be directly informed by the results of the local needs assessment process. As the Strategic Action Plan is being developed, consider

1. where the document will be stored for review, such as Google Drive or Microsoft Teams,
2. who will have access,
3. how it will be updated and revised
4. what information needs to be publicly available, and
5. how information will be shared.

Each plan will include the following four components and both ACS and Idaho AEYC will support each collaborative in finalizing their strategic action plan.

Capacity is Key

Keep the capacity of the advisory committee, project staff, and community partners in mind as you develop your action plan. A plan is only as good as your ability to implement its pieces.

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1. Guiding Statements

This part of the plan lays out the collaborative's vision and mission.

The **VISION STATEMENT** is designed to capture the future situation that the collaborative will help achieve. Each collaborative can begin developing this statement by asking what systems will be available to support children from birth through age five in the community if the collaborative achieves all of its goals.

Vision statements are aspirational and inspirational and reflect why your community is engaged in doing this work. For example, a vision statement might be, "Every child in XX community will have programs and resources available that support school readiness" or "All children from birth through five years of age in XX community will have access to quality early childhood learning opportunities." This is an opportunity to promote the sustainability of this effort and think both short- and long-term.

The **MISSION STATEMENT** describes the reason for the collaborative's existence. It clarifies the collaborative's purpose and explains the "how" for the work.

Examples include:

► The mission of XX collaborative is to engage a diverse group of residents to politically, programmatically, and financially support and advocate for early childhood opportunities.

► The mission of XX collaborative is to develop the capacity of families, communities, and public/ private agencies to provide children, ages birth through five, with equitable access to the educational supports they need to thrive.

2. Goals

Goals are the primary outcomes you want to achieve with your efforts. Setting goals helps to clarify priorities, create a clear focus, provide direction, and motivate efforts.

Collaboratives will be supported in creating goals that are aligned with **SMART** criteria: **S**pecific, **M**easurable, **A**chievable, **R**elevant, and **T**imed.

The criteria for setting three to five **SMART** goals in the Strategic Action Plan includes:

► **S**pecific: Include as much detail as you can about what you're trying to achieve, the target population, and timeline.

► **M**easurable: Identify measurable goals so it is easy to determine when you have met them. Think about including metrics such as the percent of change, how many/how much, or the number of times you will do something.

► **A**chievable: Create success by setting goals that are realistically attainable.

► **R**elevant: Goals should be relevant to your community as identified through the needs assessment process.

► **T**imed: Just as you've been specific about the amount of change you want to make and your target audience(s), you want to include a specific date/timeline for completion of each goal. It is okay if the dates are modified later in the process, however, setting a deadline or due date is a

critical element for guiding the work, managing resources, and prioritizing efforts. Keep in mind that you may need to establish timelines based on your target audiences. For example, if you are planning to engage local or state legislators, look at the relevant legislative calendar now and factor it into your planning and the setting of goals.

Here are some examples of **SMART** goals:

► By 2022, increase capacity (number of spaces available) by 20% in quality early learning programs serving children from birth through five years of age.

► By 2023, increase the number of impoverished or disadvantaged high-risk infants and toddlers (e.g., at or below 200% of the federal poverty level, homeless, or in foster care) served in high quality early learning programs by 25%.

► By 2024, achieve and maintain retention rates among child care educators employed in early learning programs by at least 40%.

► By 2025, increase positive school readiness rates (as determined/measured by the local school district) by 40%.

3. Strategies

Strategies are the ways in which goals are achieved. Using one of the examples from above, a strategy for increasing the capacity (spaces available) in quality early learning programs might be for your community to seek funding dedicated to expanding an existing early learning program that meets high quality standards to serve 30 additional community children.

For each goal, your collaborative will most likely identify two to four strategies and each strategy will clearly identify to stakeholders (and funders) how the collaborative will use current and/or future resources to support the goal. Goals often include a range of specific activities including fundraising, workforce development, public education/ awareness, policy advocacy, partnering with local businesses, and more.

4. Action Plan

Once the collaborative has identified goals and strategies, it is time to get specific. A detailed Action Plan outlines the steps and tasks that go into executing a strategy, assigns an individual to lead the task, and lays out a timeline for completion. As you are detailing the steps of your action plan, be sure to describe the rationale for your decisions and strategies.

What are goals, strategies and tactics?

GOALS are your destination.

STRATEGY is how you will get there (drive a car, take a bus, fly on a plane, or walk).

TACTICS are the turn-by-turn directions.

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Below is an example of part of an action plan. It is highly recommended to create an even more detailed plan that captures weekly milestones and subtasks to keep collaborative members on track and facilitate rapid progress.

Strategy 1: Increase capacity in quality early learning programs		
Action/Task	**Lead**	**Timeline**
1. Identify possible early learning programs that could be expanded to serve 30 more children, ages birth through 5 years, based on readiness to improve/expand, leadership, existing quality rating scores, facility capabilities, and compliance with laws/regulations.	Casey	June 5
2. Interview early learning program owners/directors to determine interest and identify possible challenges or barriers to expansion.	Blair	June 15
3. Confirm commitment agreements for programs willing to consider expansion efforts.	Chris	July 27

5. Communication, Transparency, and Implementation

Once the action plan has been developed, it may be important to communicate with stakeholders about the project and the activities that will be occurring.

Consider who your priority stakeholders are, when they need information, what information they need, and who/how is the best way for them to receive that information. Will you engage media to help spread the word about your work? Are there local organizations that can help you share information with priority stakeholders?

In addition to determining if and how the strategic action plan will be shared with external stakeholders, it is important to consider how the advisory committee will manage the implementation of the action plan. A simple Excel or Google sheet can be used to support implementation. In addition, there are several project/task management tools available online.

Questions to consider may include:

► Who is responsible for the action plan document?

► Will there be an internal version that is regularly updated?

► Who will keep the document current as progress is made?

► How will individuals be held accountable to the commitments they make in the action plan?

► Will the progress toward the strategic action goals be shared with the community, legislative members, or the media?

The important work that each collaborative is beginning through this grant will build the foundation to expand systems that support young children in Idaho today and in the future.

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Additional Tools and Templates

In addition to this guidebook, ACS will develop and share additional tools and templates throughout the course of the grant. ACS also has resources you may find helpful on our website. (www.advocacyandcommunication.org/tools-resources)

► Project checklist

► Meeting agenda template

► Worksheets for major project components, such as developing the strategic action plan

► Best practices for transitions between early childhood and K-12 schools