

Executive Summary

For the reporting year, please provide a summary of your State's (1) accomplishments, (2) lessons learned, (3) challenges, and (4) strategies you will implement to address those challenges.

Strengthened investment in high-quality early learning and development continues to energize educational improvement efforts in Michigan. From the governor's office and the legislature to local providers, business leaders, schools, and families, people are deeply committed to improving opportunities for young children with high needs in Michigan. In 2013, the Michigan Department of Education, Office of Great Start (MDE-OGS) held conversations with 1,400 parents of young children, educators, business leaders, and local and state program directors to inform development of a statewide plan to achieve Governor Snyder's stated outcomes for young children:

- Children are born healthy.
- Children are healthy, thriving, and developmentally on track from birth to third grade.
- Children are developmentally ready to succeed in school at the time of school entry.
- Children are prepared to succeed in fourth grade and beyond by reading proficiently at the end of third grade.

The resulting publication, entitled *Great Start, Great Investment, Great Future: The Plan for Early Learning and Development in Michigan*, illustrates that Michigan's citizens recognize the vital foundation that a system rich in parent involvement, community and state collaboration, and high-quality accessible early learning and development programs can provide for our youngest citizens.

Drawing from the guiding principles of this plan and with the identified outcomes for young children as a focal point, in 2013 Michigan submitted a comprehensive application for a Race to the Top-Early Learning Challenge (RTT-ELC) competitive federal grant. As a result, Michigan was awarded \$51,737,456 for the purposes of improving early learning and development in the state over a period of four years, beginning January 2014 and ending December 2017. The grant is focused on the improvement of early childhood systems through: increasing access to high-quality programs for children with high needs; implementing and coordinating an integrated system of programs; and evaluating and rating program quality.

The Michigan Department of Education, Office of Great Start was identified as the lead agency for RTT-ELC implementation in the grant application. Michigan has prioritized its work into seven projects for improving early childhood outcomes for all children. These projects are designed to support the creation of a truly collaborative system of early learning and development - one that requires the collective efforts of policymakers, program directors, providers, and parents. The projects are as follows:

1. Grant Management and Governance;
2. Improving Quality through Increased Participation in Great Start to Quality;
3. Promotion of Physical and Social-Emotional Health;
4. Enhancing and Increasing Access to the Great Start to Quality System;
5. Improving the Early Learning and Development Workforce;
6. Measuring Outcomes for Children, Programs, & Educators; and
7. Increasing Family Engagement.

To execute these projects effectively, Michigan's RTT-ELC initiative involves the following key partners: the Early Childhood Investment Corporation (ECIC); Michigan Department of Health and Human Services (MDHHS); the Center for Educational Performance and Information (CEPI) within the Michigan Department of Technology, Management and Budget; and the Michigan Association for the Education of Young Children (MiAEYC). (Note that the Michigan Department of Community Health and the Michigan Department of Human Services merged in 2015 to become the Michigan Department of Health and Human Services as described in the "Governance Structure" portion of this report.)

Through the various activities and initiatives within the seven RTT-ELC projects, we are striving to meet the following goals:

1. Increase access for children with high needs to high-quality early learning programs;
2. Increase opportunities for licensed and unlicensed home-based providers to improve the quality of their programs;
3. Ensure meaningful engagement of families in their children's early learning and development;
4. Promote children's physical, social, and emotional health;
5. Expand education and professional learning opportunities, especially for home-based providers;
6. Build an early learning data system that provides information (anonymously and in aggregate) on children across departments and programs.

Building upon the foundation that was established during the first year of Michigan's Race to the Top-Early Learning Challenge, during years two and three the Grant Implementation Group convened on a bi-monthly basis and monitoring meetings with individual RTT-ELC partners were held monthly. This infrastructure has allowed for significant progress on activities within each of Michigan's seven projects. Michigan's RTT-ELC Year 3 early learning developments, accomplishments, and challenges are organized by the five key areas defined by the federal RTT-ELC competition:

1. Establishing Successful State Systems

In establishing the Office of Great Start (OGS) in 2011, Governor Snyder laid out OGS's charge to (a) align, consolidate, and/or integrate early childhood funding and related programs around the state's early childhood outcomes, and (b) coordinate the state's policy, budget, and programs for early childhood. As such, OGS coordinates and aligns the state's early learning and development investments for children with high needs in close and regular collaboration with senior staff from MDHHS and ECIC to work toward achieving our early childhood outcomes. OGS oversees the ECIC's implementation of our tiered quality rating and improvement system. OGS also partners with Michigan's intermediate school districts (ISDs) to ensure coordination between state level early childhood efforts and that of local early childhood collaborative bodies and parent coalitions, with the goal of balancing both local and state perspectives in decision making, accountability, and policy. Fifty-four Great Start Collaboratives (GSCs) serve all 83 Michigan counties and members consist of public and private community leaders, including parents. Each GSC has a partner organization called a Great Start Parent Coalition (GSPC), comprised of passionate local volunteers who educate community and state leaders about the importance of investing in young children and provide the "parent voice" to inform the GSCs' decision making. GSPCs are coordinated by a paid Parent Liaison position.

Through RTT-ELC initiatives, Michigan works to further strengthen this coordination and collaboration both across partner agencies and across state and local

networks.

The progress made toward these efforts in Year 3 includes:

- Convening the RTT-ELC Grant Implementation Group bi-monthly, inclusive of representation from partner organizations;
- Convening of the Great Start Operations Team monthly, guiding operational coordination of interagency initiatives that align with the Governor's early childhood outcomes for the population's 0-8 year olds;
- Establishing an Early Childhood Data Governance Council comprised of State agency leadership to ensure that the data required to enable OGS to meet its strategic objectives are available, trusted and of consistent quality;
- Hiring a Family Engagement Specialist within MDE;
- Hiring a Social-Emotional Health Coordinator within MDHHS;
- Hiring a Data Specialist within MDE;
- Maintaining staffing to provide direct oversight to the scope of work and budget for individual grant partners;
- Obtaining local and stakeholder input/involvement for a number of RTT-ELC initiatives;
- Convening members of the Office of Great Start Advisory Council to help identify and define policy issues, use local experiences to improve state policy, and identify how best to communicate with key stakeholders across OGS initiatives, including RTT-ELC;
- Developed a robust communication plan to effectively engage and inform all RTT-ELC partners and stakeholders.
- Developing a Request for Proposals to identify a contractor to collaborate with RTT-ELC grant partners for the development and implementation of a Sustainability Plan.

2. Promoting Early Learning and Development Outcomes for Children

Michigan is committed to ensuring that children with high needs have greater access to high quality early learning programs, wherever such programs are delivered. Great Start to Quality (GSQ), our tiered Quality Rating and Improvement System, is essential to achieving that goal. Through RTT-ELC, Michigan will develop and implement effective strategies for improving the quality of early learning programs by increasing participation in Great Start to Quality. Michigan's first goal for this RTT-ELC reform area is to significantly increase access to high-quality early learning and development programs for children with high needs. In Michigan, center-based early learning programs and group homes are licensed, home-based providers are registered, and individuals who enroll to care for children eligible for child care subsidies are considered unlicensed, subsidized. The specific strategies and related outcomes associated with this goal include:

- Increase unlicensed provider participation in GSQ by providing training and consultation to support quality improvement of unlicensed providers;
- Increase home-based provider participation in GSQ in target communities through placement of regional Quality Improvement Specialists offering outreach and individualized technical assistance;
- Increase licensed provider participation in GSQ through participation bonuses targeted toward providers serving families at or below 185% of the federal poverty

level;

- Increase licensed provider participation in GSQ through targeted offering of Quality Improvement Grants;
- Support licensing consultants to become ambassadors for GSQ.

The progress made toward these efforts in Year 3 includes:

- Achieving forty percent provider participation in Great Start to Quality, progressing toward Michigan's metric of fifty percent participation by the end of the grant.
- Implementation of the unlicensed, subsidized provider cohort project, to support this particular provider population. This resulted in participation of a total of 305 unlicensed, subsidized providers over the course of Year 3. At the end of the Year 3, 165 were participating as part of the eight cohorts. Of those, 105 received the second level of the Quality Development Continuum and nine achieved the third level. These are the first unlicensed subsidized providers to reach Level 3 since the inception of the Quality Development Continuum. Additionally, one cohort participant achieved licensure with the State of Michigan;
- Execution of contracts for Great Start to Quality Resource Centers in targeted RTT-ELC communities to increase participation for family/group home providers;
- Implementation of the GSQ participation incentives based on stakeholder feedback. The Participation Bonus was awarded to 1,458 programs and providers in Year 3;
- Gathering feedback from licensing consultants to learn about their use of the Great Start to Quality STARS platform - Michigan's online platform where providers receive their star rating;
- Implementation of the Quality Improvement Grants based on stakeholder feedback. Quality Improvement Grants were awarded to 366 programs and providers during the pilot. An additional 604 awards were made during the second cycle; and
- Developing Michigan's Professional Development Registry system.

Michigan's second goal for this RTT-ELC reform area is to realize an early learning and development system with improved access for families and children to high-quality early learning programs and services. The specific strategies and related outcomes associated with this goal include:

- Encourage participation of tribal and early childhood special education programs (Early Childhood Special Education/Section 619) in GSQ through system enhancements and stronger relationships with these programs;
- Streamline program monitoring efforts to allow licensing consultants to increase focus on improving program quality;
- Increase access to high-quality early learning and care programs in Pathways to Potential communities by providing scholarships (Pathways to Potential is a community-based approach placing Michigan Department of Health and Human Services employees in schools where high numbers of families are already receiving assistance through the department. The Pathways approach targets five outcome areas: attendance, education, health, safety, and self-sufficiency. It also relies on a number of support networks and partnerships to wrap their arms around children and families to help them succeed.);
- Conduct outreach to families in Pathways to Potential communities to increase the percentage of families accessing high-quality early learning and development programs.

The progress made toward these efforts in Year 3 includes:

- Development of child care licensing key indicators;
- Maintaining a MDHHS Departmental Specialist position to provide critical support and assistance administering departmental responsibilities relating to RTT-ELC and to connect and align early childhood funding and programs across departments;
- Developing partnerships for outreach and engagement of tribal programs to encourage participation in GSQ;
- Requesting an amendment to the RTT Budget to repurpose child care scholarship funds toward sustainable approaches for increasing access to high-quality early learning and care programs (see Section B(1) of the report).

Michigan is implementing a strategy to promote early learning and development outcomes for children by expanding and improving efforts to engage families in meaningful ways and support their development as leaders for their own children and communities. Efforts will focus on increasing family access to skill development resources designed to promote the physical, social, and emotional health of their children. Therefore, Michigan's third goal for this RTT-ELC reform area is to invest in family engagement and education strategies designed to increase access to high-quality early learning programs with an emphasis in Pathways to Potential communities. The specific strategies and related outcomes associated with this goal include:

- Incorporate Strengthening Families™ (SF) Protective Factors into the GSQ program standards;
- Place Family Engagement Consultants in target communities to support parents and providers;
- Provide training modules about the GSQ Family and Community Partnerships standards;
- Assist families and providers in understanding and adopting protective factors into daily practice;
- Establish and coordinate networks of trusted advisors able to provide support to families in their local communities;
- Develop and distribute supplemental materials to support family understanding and interpretation of Kindergarten Entry Assessment data.

The progress made toward these efforts in Year 3 includes:

- Hiring a Family Engagement Specialist within the Office of Great Start to lead RTT-ELC efforts focusing on increasing family engagement;
- Conducting training sessions for Pathways to Potential Success Coaches to strengthen family engagement efforts in local communities;
- Developing of a model for specialized consultation for strengthening parent engagement efforts in Pathways to Potential communities, including the creation of position descriptions and making determinations for which local agencies will hire the Family Engagement Consultants early in 2017;
- Establishing grant criteria and the application process for administering funding for the trusted advisors work;
- Convening a committee to conduct a Gap Analysis amongst the Great Start to Quality Program Indicators, the Michigan Early Childhood Standards of Quality for Infant and Toddler Programs, the Michigan Early Childhood Standards of Quality for Prekindergarten, and the Program Quality Assessments for Pre-k, Infants & Toddlers, and Family Child Care. These indicators and standards will be compared with the Strengthening Families Framework to identify if the SF Protective Factors

are adequately addressed.

3. Defining High-Quality, Accountable Programs

Michigan is also implementing a strategy to assist families and providers of early learning and care in supporting the healthy development and well-being of children with high needs. To accomplish this goal, Michigan is building on efforts already underway across the state to increase healthy behaviors through education and personal action. Through RTT-ELC, these efforts will increase the availability of high-quality early learning programs that meet the physical and social-emotional health needs of young children, with a focus on Pathways to Potential communities. Michigan's goal for this RTT-ELC reform area is to help create an early learning and development system that supports the physical and social-emotional development of children from birth to 8 years of age.

The specific strategies and related outcomes associated with this goal include:

- Align GSO program standards with nationally recognized physical and social-emotional health standards;
- Develop training and technical assistance materials and supports that promote both healthy habits for families and providers, as well as developmental screening and referral procedures;
- Provide consultants to support home-based providers in meeting the physical and social-emotional health needs of young children.

The progress made toward these efforts in Year 3 includes:

- Conducting a Gap Analysis of the QRIS system standards with regard to children's health and safety by comparing them to the Caring for Our Children Stepping Stones national health and safety performance standards guidelines for early care and education programs;
- Hiring two positions to focus on the work of Project 3, a Departmental Analyst and a Health Coordinator, who will lead the work of the Physical Health Consultants within the selected communities. Both positions start in January 2017;
- Developing a model for specialized consultation to support home-based providers in meeting the physical and social-emotional health needs of young children, including development of position descriptions for the Physical Health and Social Emotional Health Consultants, gathering stakeholder feedback, and identifying the hiring entities for both types of consultants;
- Developing the evaluation for specialized consultation;
- Hiring a Social Emotional Health Coordinator at MDHHS;
- Developing the assessment tools and training materials for Social Emotional and Physical Health Consultants;
- Hiring, training and deploying the first cadre of Social Emotional Consultants in Genesee, Kalamazoo and Saginaw counties.

4. Supporting a Strong Early Childhood Education Workforce

Research shows the positive impact of a quality early childhood educator on a child's development. Therefore, Michigan is focused on ensuring that early childhood educators have the skills and knowledge they need to be successful. While supporting early childhood educators statewide, Michigan's RTT-ELC initiatives are targeting home-based providers who serve high needs children in their programs. Michigan's goal for this RTT-ELC reform area is that every young child in Michigan has access to an effective early childhood educator by 2020. The specific strategies being implemented and related

outcomes associated with this goal include:

- Expand online Child Development Associate (CDA) credential programs for early childhood educators;
- Increase the number of National Association for the Education of Young Children (NAEYC) accredited community college early learning programs;
- Expand opportunities for home-based providers to earn a degree, as well as increase the supply of staff qualified to teach in Michigan's Great Start Readiness Program (GSRP), through Teacher Education And Compensation Helps (T.E.A.C.H.) scholarships;
- Increase access to training focused on achieving GSQ standards for program administration.

The progress made toward these efforts in Year 3 include:

- Requesting and receiving approval for an amendment to the scope of work for CDA Online, shifting from generating new programs to increasing awareness of the existing programs that have emerged organically since the time of the RTT-ELC application (see Section D(1) for details);
- Awarding funding to eight colleges to pursue NAEYC accreditation and one college to pursue reaccreditation from NAEYC;
- Planning and implementing a Higher Education summit where the primary topic of discussion was improving available high quality online course offerings;
- Providing 556 T.E.A.C.H. scholarships to eligible providers for 2016, including 152 scholarships to home-based providers and 404 scholarships to providers seeking certification to teach in GSRP.
- Contracting with Public Consulting Group to develop, implement and evaluate a Business Training model for home and center-based providers.

5. Measuring Outcomes and Progress

Michigan is implementing a strategy to include data for all federal and state funded early learning programs in the Statewide Longitudinal Data System (MSLDS). This will enable the state to better understand the quality of care and education experiences of our youngest learners. Michigan will ensure that these data are also available to families, educators, researchers, and others needing access to data to support early learning improvements. Michigan's goal for this RTT-ELC reform area is to build an early learning data system that provides aggregated data across departments and programs. The specific strategies and related outcomes associated with this goal include:

- Create a management structure that will plan, organize, regulate, and guide the collection of, access to, and use of MSLDS data;
- Improve the existing Statewide Longitudinal Data System (MSLDS) to create links to essential early childhood data elements;
- Increase access to data to improve program delivery and effectiveness, to inform resource investment and policy decisions, and to empower families to make better decisions for their children;
- Improve data collection about early childhood educators to help improve policies that impact Michigan's early childhood educators.

The progress made toward these efforts in Year 3 includes:

- Conclusion of a pilot to establish Unique Identification Codes (UIC) for Head Start

children;

- Conducting outreach to Head Start grantees to connect additional programs to MSLDS;
- Establishing a process for longitudinally tracking children who receive subsidized childcare services in Michigan;
- Beginning a process for collecting and connecting Great Start to Quality data in MSLDS;
- Releasing two Early Childhood reports, including "Early Childhood Count of Children Receiving Early Childhood Programs and Services" and "Count of Kindergarten Students receiving Early Childhood Programs and Services in the Prior Year";
- Creation of two additional Early Childhood reports, including "Pathways to Kindergarten" and "Early Childhood Impact on K-3 Absenteeism," to be released on the MI School Data website early in 2017;
- Establishing a Data Governance structure for Early Childhood Data in Michigan;
- Hiring a Data Specialist within MDE.

Year 3 Challenges:

The Michigan Department of Education (MDE) and the Michigan Department of Health and Human Services (MDHHS) experienced major challenges over the course of 2016 resulting from the Flint Water Crisis (described in the Successful State Systems section of this report). These challenges caused significant delay to activities outlined in Project 3. However, by the end of 2016, a clear plan for implementation was established between MDE and MDHHS, which is in process of being executed.

Early in 2016, the Family Engagement Specialist was hired. This individual is responsible for leading the majority of activities within Project 7. While the start to this work has been slow, focused efforts to lay the foundation for these activities have positioned Michigan for successful implementation in 2017.

Both projects impacted by these challenges include activities that pertain to Michigan's plan to develop, implement and evaluate a model for Specialized Consultation. While the first three social-emotional consultants were hired at the end of 2016, the second cadre of social-emotional consultants and both cadres of physical health and family engagement consultants will not be hired until early in 2017. The scope of work outlines that these consultants will be in the field for close to two years. Given that 2017 is the fourth year of this four year work project, Michigan plans to request a one year no-cost extension to fully implement this work.