

## 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.

### ACCOMPLISHMENTS

The cross agency RTT-ELC team has continued to implement the eleven projects that our federal partners have approved in New Jersey's Scope of Work (SOW). After year three of implementation, the majority of tasks within each of the projects have been completed within the timeframes approved within the SOW. Amongst the various activities and tasks, the three initiatives below stand out as accomplishments.

#### Project 9: Preschool-3<sup>rd</sup> Grade Initiative

The New Jersey Department of Education, in partnership with Rutgers University, Graduate School of Education (GSE) and the National Institute for Early Education Research (NIEER) have developed *First through Third Grade Implementation Guidelines* with funding provided by the Race to the Top Early Learning Challenge (RTT-ELC) Grant <http://www.state.nj.us/education/ece/rttt/k3/>. Furthermore, we have begun research on the implementation of these guidelines in twenty districts throughout the state <http://nieer.org/press-release/nieer-partners-20-new-jersey-school-districts-enhance-k-3-education>.

The purpose of this work is multifaceted. During the project, we aim to examine the classrooms in Kindergarten through third grade to have an aggregate look at the instruction in these grades. This information will be used to guide the professional learning opportunities offered through the Division of Early Childhood Education at NJDOE. The longitudinal look at classrooms will enable feedback on the impact of the professional learning provided to teachers.

#### Project 8: Data Systems

This past year has been a productive year for the data project as several project milestones and deliverables have been met or are in progress. The work that follows below is evidence that moving the data project from a year one challenge to a year two accomplishment is a warranted move.

Major accomplishments this year include:

- **Project Management:** Monitored and updated the NJ-EASEL Work Breakdown Structure through ongoing planning sessions to determine the activities which can be completed prior to the end of the grant period (12/31/2017). Determined it would be necessary to request a no cost extension for 2018 in order to complete the initial Phase 1 implementation. In addition, it is likely scope will need to be reduced and/or more resources will be required.
- **Data Governance:** Data Governance Plan (DGP) was fully executed by the four NJ-EASEL participating agencies. The DGP has been used as a key reference document by both the NJ-EASEL Steering Committee and the NJ-EASEL Policy & Data Governance Council over the past year. Two more of the four Data Sharing Agreements (DSA) between the participating agencies were fully executed (Multi-Agency Memorandum of Agreement (MOA) for Data Sharing, and DOE and DOH MOA for Data Sharing) which leaves one DSA in progress.
- **Requirements Definition & Analysis:** Completed Source Data Analysis Sessions for the remaining 5 Group 1 source systems. Focused on Data Mapping activities (mapping source system data elements to the Crosswalk of NJ-EASEL Questions and Objectives, and to NJ-EASEL Child Master Data, Programs and Events) and initiated Mockup Reports.
- **Design:** Completed additional Logical and Physical Data Model Designs and associated ETL Data Mapping for 2 NJ DOE systems. Continued Logical and initiated Physical Data Model Designs and ETL Data Mapping for 1 NJ DHS system. Initiated Integrated Design activities for Child Master Data.
- **Development & Testing:** Completed development of 2 of the 3 ETL Processes components for 2 NJ DOE systems and 1 component for 1 DHS system. Initiated development of the 3<sup>rd</sup> ETL Process component

for the 2 NJ DOE systems.

## **Project 6: Family Engagement and Health Connections**

This project is one of the most robust projects in the grant as there are major activities spread through all of the participating state agencies. The following two activities have made significant progress over the last year.

The County Councils for Young Children (CCYCs) are established in all 21 counties in New Jersey. This statewide initiative is a collaboration with the New Jersey Council for Young Children (NJCYC), DCF, DOE, DOH and DHS. The CCYCs were created to strengthen cooperative collaboration between parents, families, and local community providers with health, early care and education, family support, and other service providers. The CCYC is a community organization for social service planning. This body of community members (e.g. parents, community residents and community providers), come together and receive training and technical assistance in parent leadership and shared leadership models. These approaches embrace and encourage parents/community residents to be active partners with service providers and community leaders. A list of the councils can be accessed here <http://www.state.nj.us/education/ece/njcyccounty/>.

The CCYCs have a direct link to the New Jersey Council for Young Children through the Family and Community Engagement Committee. Elected members of the CCYCs have participated in several Family and Community Engagement Committee meetings, provided guidance, and gave input on the development of the Family Engagement Standards, which is also an activity of RTT-ELC. All 21 CCYCs now have a designated coordinator and basic structure in place --Steering Committee, Health, Education and Safety Workgroups, and General Membership meetings. Committees/workgroups are co-led by community and parent stakeholders.

One way that these councils assist families to identify the needs, aspirations and successes of collective efforts to positively influence the health, education and well-being of children from pregnancy/birth to age eight is through training in the Strengthening Families Protective Factor Framework. The CCYC participants work together using the Strengthening Families Protective Factors Framework and the New Jersey Standards for Prevention Programs: Building Success through Family Support. This training is developed by the New Jersey Task Force on Child Abuse and Neglect to engage parents and develop mutual goals and recommend creative strategies/solutions that respect the views and priorities of diverse families in the community.

Next, the NJ Department of Health expanded a core health component, Central Intake Hubs (CIH), to improve access for parents and families to needed infant/child health services and supports in all counties. Central intake provides families and providers with easy access for resource information and referrals to a wide range of local community services that promote child and family wellness, support health literacy between parents, health care providers, and early learning programs. The primary focus of central intake is to facilitate linkages from pregnancy to age five. However, all county sites will assist families and individuals with needed connections across the lifespan. Central Intake services are a collaboration between the New Jersey Departments of Health, and Children and Families, and the Department of Education. The primary focus of central intake is to assist pregnant women, parents and families with young children in accessing the most appropriate services in an efficient manner. Central intake works closely with partners to eliminate duplication of efforts and services, and maximizes the collective impact and appropriate utilization of available and often scarce resources.

During this current year of implementation, central intake has been successful in promoting services in communities by meeting with collaborating agencies and forming new partnerships. Successful Referrals, Resources, Appointments, (RRA'S) created for the current grant year was **10,358**. Central intake along with partnerships with the County Council for Young Children have been successful in bringing new partners to the table this year. These partners along with parents have been able to identify some barriers such as transportation, and long wait time for appointments.

## **LESSONS LEARNED**

New Jersey entered this work with a structure in place that created the foundation to accomplish the work approved by our federal partners in the SOW. The Interdepartmental Planning Group (IPG) is the primary implementation arm for programs and policies affecting young children in the state. It includes the administrators (under the Commissioners) from each of the state's departments with oversight of programs and

services related to children from prenatal to age eight, and other relevant agencies. This group considers the feasibility of program and policy recommendations, makes plans for implementation, presents those plans to the various agency commissioners, and ultimately carries out the plans while working in close collaboration with all other relevant state organizations and agencies. Although New Jersey entered the RTT-ELC work in round three, we have been working at many of the projects for some time, because of this IPG structure. For example, Grow NJ Kids (GNJK) has been an IPG focus since the inception of the IPG. What is clear is that the work outlined in RTT-ELC would not have been possible without the strength of the *cross-agency relationship*, made manifest in the work of the IPG.

In addition to the relationship of the agency partners, making an early *commitment to human capital* by filling positions required in the grant as soon as possible has proven fruitful. For instance, we can attribute the year three accomplishments in Project 8: Data Systems to having dedicated staff that focus on and accomplish the requisite tasks. It is hard to imagine the administration of such an initiative without a team dedicated to the rollout and coordination needed for the work to be successful.

Lastly, an important lesson learned was the attention needed for *sustainability* issues early in the life of the grant. It is important to all partners, (agency partners and beyond) that we are not merely “four-year friends.” The work of the grant is extensive and needs significant planning to be sustained. Although the entire sustainability picture is not yet complete, we initiated a formal sustainability planning process in January 2017 and will produce a sustainability report in June 2017.

While there have been many lessons learned during the first two years of implementation, a focus on *cross-agency relations*, a determination to get the “right people on the bus” by *focusing on human capital* and filling positions with quality individuals quickly, and an immediate effort to *plan for sustainability*, have been the biggest lesson learned.

## **CHALLENGES**

The largest challenge that New Jersey has faced in the third year of implementation is the timing of the sustainability planning. Initially, we had hoped to begin a formal process in the fall of 2016, but the planning was delayed because of difficulties securing an outside facilitator.

## **STRATEGIES TO ADDRESS CHALLENGES**

Despite the challenge listed above and the temporary delay that ensued, we are well on our way to planning for sustainability. Over the next six months, we will involve outside stakeholders as well as agency staff to develop a plan that follows the process outlined below:

- Designate Interagency Planning Team as leadership team for sustainability planning process ( six meetings will be held in all)
- Created Sustainability Planning Group, consisting of lead project staff across all relevant agencies, to support the sustainability planning (two meetings will be held)
- Adopt Sustainability Framework to analyze all work:
  - Policy importance- how important is this effort from a policy standpoint?
  - Impact- what is the evidence of effectiveness?
  - Need- what is the critical, demonstrated need for the effort?
  - Progress to Date- what progress can we demonstrate?
  - Evaluation- do we have any evaluation data supporting the work?
  - Financing- how difficult will it be to gather financial resources for sustainability?
  - Organization- how difficult will it be to gather organizational resources for sustainability?
  - Human Resources- how difficult will it be to gather human resources for sustainability?
  - Support- what is the level of community support?
  - Support- what is the level of leadership support? (agency, statewide)
  - Vision- how does this project align with the vision?
  - Federally required/mandated- is this federally required/mandated
- Gather information on each project using the Sustainability Framework
- Conduct stakeholder survey
- Produce sustainability report in June 2017