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Arizona Early Childhood Model System

Vision

All Arizona children by the time they are five years old have a solid foundation for success in school and in life because we have worked together to create a family centered, comprehensive, collaborative, and high quality early childhood system that addresses the child's development, health, and early education.

The Child

The early childhood system addresses the child's:

- Development (Physical, Cognitive, Speech and Language, and Social-Emotional)
- Health (Physical, Mental, Oral, Nutritional)
- Early Education

System Partners

- Arizona's young children and their families
- Arizona communities, including Tribal communities
- Faith-based communities and their programs
- Community health organizations and providers including physicians, nurses, dentists and therapists
- Early care and education organizations and providers, including those who provide early intervention and address special needs
- Family support organizations and providers, including home visitors
- Public and private transportation organizations and providers
- K-12 educators and administrators
- Those who educate providers, including colleges and universities
- Researchers
- Community agencies
- Foundations/philanthropy
- Advocacy organizations
- Policy makers at the federal, state and local levels
- State agencies, notably First Things First and its Regional Councils, Department of Economic Security, Department of Education, Department of Health Services and AHCCCS
- Professional associations
- Business community
- Media
- Elected Officials

System Elements

- Leadership
- Governance
- Adequate and secure funding
- Qualified and well-paid workforce
- Standards of practice and a means for monitoring them
- Needs/asset assessment, research/evaluation, and planning/development based on findings
- Technology support
- Public awareness and support
- Coordination among those involved in the early childhood system

Foundational Elements

- Basic survival elements (food, water, air, shelter)
- Safety and security (nurturance, protection from physical threat, psychological safety)
- Family health promotion and health care for women and men, including services that contribute to healthy birth

System Characteristics

- Child and family centered – the system will focus on the child and family, recognize that each child and family is unique, and be developed and implemented in a manner that facilitates their engagement in the system; the system will be driven by Arizona’s families
- Strength based – the system will be built and implemented in a manner that identifies, builds on, and strengthens the many assets of Arizona’s children and families, their cultures, and their communities
- Comprehensive – the system will address all aspects of child development and health
- Scalable – the system can be implemented throughout the state and for all families, resources permitting
- Outcome focused – goals will be clear and measurable
- Effective – outcomes for children and families, as well as the functioning of the system, will be measured and desired results will be achieved
- Accountable – the system will be transparent, subject to ongoing monitoring and evaluation, and responsive to Arizona’s children, families, and the communities of which they are an integral part
- Well funded – resources that are adequate to support the development and implementation of the system will be dedicated to this purpose
- Sustainable – as the system is developed and implemented, consideration will be given to sustaining the system over time
- Collaborative – agencies at all levels, organizations, and individuals involved in the development, funding, implementation, and utilization of the system will help to design, evaluate, and continually improve it
- High quality – the system will be designed, developed, and implemented with recognition of lessons learned from research, evaluation, and experience; the system will seek to meet or exceed standards of good practice in all aspects
- Inclusive and respectful – the system will encompass all Arizona’s children and will honor their individuality while promoting their inclusion in the system
- Equitable – all children, families, and communities will be considered in the assessment of assets and needs and in systems planning and implementation
- Flexible – the system will change as conditions and requirements change
- Clear – while broad in scope and complex in undertaking, the system will be easy to understand and explain
- Seamless – the system will involve many agencies, organizations, and individuals who work together so that services, supports, and funding for them are well-articulated and wrap around the family in a coherent way
- Community based – like children and families, communities are unique; the system recognizes, supports, and builds on the key role communities play in early childhood development and health
- Widely known – Arizonans will have an accurate understanding of the system, how it works, and its goals
- Publicly supported – Arizonans will support public policies that foster early childhood development and health
- Developmentally appropriate and culturally responsive – the system will promote the creation of and support for services that address the unique needs and preferences of each child and family within the context of their culture and community
- Available and accessible to families – the system will encompass services and supports for families **in all communities** throughout Arizona and will function in a manner that overcomes barriers to utilization of these services and supports
- Affordable – the system will develop and provide services and supports that Arizona’s families can afford to access when they are needed
- Innovative and Arizona specific – the system envisioned will not be a replication of another system, but will incorporate lessons learned from others and be designed with an understanding of Arizona’s unique assets and conditions; it will be inspired by a commitment to Arizona’s children and families and serve as a model for other states



				Actual indicators will be developed and available for future review	
System Outcomes	In order for the System Outcomes in Column 1 to be achieved, the following conditions must be met	In order to create these conditions in Column 2, FTF could play the following roles	If FTF plays the role described in Column 3, these are the objectives that FTF would be working toward	Example Short to Mid-term Indicators of Success	Example Mid to Long-term Indicators of Success
1. All children have access to high quality, culturally responsive early care and education that promotes their optimal development.	A. There is a comprehensive early care and education system that is aligned both across the spectrum of settings and with the full continuum of the educational system.	1. Early Care and Education System Development and Implementation - Convene partners and provide leadership in the development and implementation of a comprehensive early care and education system that is aligned both across the spectrum of settings and with the full continuum of the educational system.	a) There is a clear plan for the early care and education system that describes the system, aligns programs and services across all types of settings and with the full continuum of the educational system (P-20), and defines roles and responsibilities of those involved in its implementation.	A comprehensive early care and education system plan is completed, agreement reached, and an implementation plan is followed.	X% of programs at X level of quality X% of children attending early care attend programs at X level of quality X% of early care and education programs cost less than the X% of the median family income X% of children are at X level of Kindergarten readiness
			b) Agencies and organizations involved in early care and education have a common understanding of the system and share ownership in ensuring access to for all children to high quality, culturally responsive early care and education.	A coordinated children’s budget with adequate fiscal support is in place.	
			c) Funding for early care and education is identified and aligned to eliminate gaps and prevent unnecessary duplication.	A comprehensive early care and education system plan is completed, agreement reached, and an implementation plan is followed.	
			d) Early care and education programs and services are identified and aligned.	Provisions for coordinated monitoring of early care and education programs are in place.	
			e) Monitoring for system programs is aligned and coordinated among early care and education agencies and organizations.		
	B. There are health, safety, and quality standards for early care and education; support for attaining the standards; and a process for monitoring them.	2. Quality Early Care and Education Standards, Curriculum, and Assessment - Convene partners, provide leadership, and provide funding for the development and implementation of quality standards for early childhood care and education programs and related curricula and assessments.	a) Uniform quality standards have been identified and adopted for all early care and education programs in Arizona.	Quality standards are implemented across all early care and education programs.	
		b) Curricula and assessments that are aligned with quality standards are in use in early care and education programs throughout Arizona.	Curricula and assessments that are aligned with quality standards are used by all early care and education programs.		



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			c) There is an integrated data system for early care and education.	Resources, timelines and coordination required to collect, disseminate and interpret data are identified.	
	<p>C. Arizona has enough high quality, culturally responsive, affordable early care and education programs and settings to meet the needs of children and families in all communities throughout the state.</p> <p>D. Children and families have access to high quality, culturally responsive, affordable early care and education programs where they live and work.</p> <p>E. Families have a choice of schedules (part-day or full-day, part-year or full-year), type of provider, and type of setting.</p>	<p>3. Quality, Access, and Affordability of Regulated Early Care and Education Settings - Convene partners, provide leadership, and provide funding for increased availability of and access to high quality, regulated, culturally responsive, and affordable early care and education programs.</p>	a) More regulated early care and education programs attain a rating of 3 stars or higher.	X% of regulated programs at level of quality	
			b) More families know about the importance of quality and of selecting early care and education programs that have attained a rating of 3 stars or higher.	X% of children attending regulated early care attend programs at X level of quality	
			c) More children are enrolled in early care and education programs that have attained a rating of 3 stars or higher.		
			d) There are more quality early care and education programs available to families across Arizona.	Ratio of regulated early care and education spaces at X level of quality to # of children whose families seek a quality program	
			e) Quality early care and education programs are affordable for all families.	X% of regulated early care and education programs cost less than X% of median family income	
			4. Quality of Family, Friend, and Neighbor Early Care and Education Settings - Convene partners, provide leadership, and provide funding to improve the quality of culturally responsive early care and education provided by family, friends, and neighbors.	a) Quality of care and education provided in family, friend, and neighbor settings is improved.	



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2. All children have access to high quality preventive and continuous health care, including physical, mental, oral, and nutritional health.	A. Arizona has enough high quality, affordable, comprehensive health care services to meet the needs of children and families in all communities throughout the state.	1. Supply of Health Care Services - Collaborate with partners to assess and expand the supply of high quality, affordable, comprehensive health care services.	a) More health care professionals are providing affordable, comprehensive services to young children and their families in remote and underserved areas of Arizona.	X% of Medically Underserved Areas/Populations increase the ratio of primary care physicians to population by X%	X% of children age 0-5 receive all recommended well child visits
	B. Children and families have access to high quality, affordable health care coverage and services, including services that contribute to healthy births.	2. Access to Quality Health Care Coverage and Services - Collaborate with partners to increase access to high quality health care services (including oral health and mental health) and affordable health care coverage for young children and their families.	a) More dentists across Arizona serve pediatric populations. b) More children across Arizona have access to preventive oral health services.	X% increase in patients 0-5 per year in X% of counties	X% of children age 0-5 receive all recommended oral health visits
	C. Families, those who serve young children and their families, and communities promote and support good nutrition and active lifestyles for Arizona's children.	3. Nutrition and Physical Activity - Collaborate with partners to support improved nutrition and increased age/developmentally appropriate physical activity levels among young children.	c) More families are aware of children's health insurance and how to enroll their children.	X% of children age 0-5 currently have health insurance that pays for part or all health care X% of children age 0-5 currently have health insurance that pays for part or all dental care X% of children age 0-5 currently have health insurance that pays for part or all mental/behavioral health care	X% of children age 0-5 are at normal body weight X% of children 0-5 who have been appropriately identified and receive early intervention services
			a) More early care and education programs incorporate good nutrition and increased age/developmentally appropriate physical activity into their programs for young children and their families	X% of regulated early care and education programs enrolled in Empower program	



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			b) More families are aware of the importance of good nutrition and age/developmentally appropriate physical activity and incorporate it into their daily routines.	X% of children 0-5 eat at least X servings of vegetables on an average day X% of children age 0-5 were physically active (at least 60 minutes) X days in the last week	
	D. Health care for young children is coordinated via a medical and dental home.	4. Medical and Dental Homes - Collaborate with partners to increase access to medical and dental homes for young children and their families.	a) Medical and dental homes are available to young children and their families across Arizona.	X% of children 0-5 have a dentist or place they regularly go for oral health care X% of children 0-5 have a physician or place they regularly go for health care	
	E. All children are provided access to early periodic screening and diagnosis to identify physical, mental, and developmental health issues and, if necessary, follow-up treatment/services are provided.	5. Early Screening and Intervention – Collaborate with partners to increase awareness of and access to a continuum of information, support, and services for families and their children who have or are at risk of having developmental, physical, and/or mental health issues.	a) Resources for information, support, and early intervention services (including screening) that promote early childhood development, identify developmental variation/concerns, connect families with community resources, and/or provide appropriate intervention services are readily available to families throughout the state.	# of resources available for early screening and intervention	
			b) More early intervention professionals have specialized training in working with young children and their families.	% of early intervention professionals with specialized training	
	3. All families have the information, services, and support they need to help their children achieve	A. Families receive high quality, diverse, and relevant information and education on the importance of the early years, child development, health, and early education in a variety of formats	1. Information and Education for Families - Convene partners, provide leadership, and provide funding for the development and coordinated dissemination of high quality, diverse, and relevant information and education on the importance of the early	a) More families who want or need assistance have access to timely and appropriate information and education to increase their competence and confidence to ensure their children enter school healthy and ready to succeed.	



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their fullest potential.	B. Families have easy access to information on the quality and availability of programs and services.	years, child development, health, early education, and related resources for families, providers, partners, and the public	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> b) More families have the information they need to select quality programs that meet their needs and preferences. c) Agencies and organizations working with young children and their families provide culturally responsive, accurate, and timely information in a coordinated manner to families. 	% of families report they have access to information necessary to select quality programs	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> understand appropriate behavior for a child age 0-5 X% of families understand the importance of the early years
	C. Families have access to a variety of high quality, culturally responsive, and affordable services, supports, and community resources, which promote their child's development (physical, cognitive, speech and language, and social-emotional) and health.	2. Supports and Services for Families - Convene partners, provide leadership, provide funding, and advocate for development, enhancement, and sustainability of a variety of high quality, culturally responsive, and affordable services, supports, and community resources for young children and their families.	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> a) More families who want or need assistance have access to a continuum of services, supports, and resources in their communities across Arizona to increase their competence and confidence to ensure their children enter school healthy and ready to succeed. b) More families have access to the knowledge, skills, and resources to assist their children with emergent literacy and language development. c) Family services and supports that lead to effective parenting are delivered in accordance with standards of practice. d) Family services and supports are planned, developed, funded, and delivered in a coordinated manner that best meets the needs and preferences of families and leverages available resources. e) More families are involved in the development and provision of family services and supports. 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> X% of families are satisfied with the availability and quality of early childhood services X% of families indicate that services meet the needs of their family X% of families read to their child 0-5 daily X% of families sing or tell stories to their child age 0-5 daily A quality standard of practice for family services and supports is in place and used A comprehensive family service and support plan is completed, agreement reached, and an implementation plan is followed # of family representatives involved in development of a comprehensive family service and support plan 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> X% of families read to their child 0-5 daily X% of families sing or tell stories to their child age 0-5 daily X% of families are satisfied with the availability and quality of early childhood services X% of families indicate that services meet the needs of their family



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4. All early childhood education and health professionals are well prepared, highly skilled, and compensated commensurate with their education and experience.	<p>A. Arizona has enough culturally diverse early childhood professionals working in a variety of capacities to meet the needs of Arizona’s children and families in all communities throughout the state.</p> <p>B. Early childhood professionals meet specified educational/professional development requirements and continue their professional development throughout their careers.</p> <p>C. There are sufficient educational opportunities to meet the needs of early childhood professionals throughout Arizona.</p> <p>D. Early childhood professionals throughout Arizona have access to the education and ongoing professional development required to work in the setting of their choice and facilitate their professional growth.</p>	<p>1. Professional Development System - Convene partners, provide leadership, and provide funding for the development and enhancement of an early childhood professional development system that addresses availability, accessibility, affordability, quality, and articulation.</p>	a) There is comprehensive and well-articulated professional development system within Arizona.	A comprehensive early childhood professional development system plan is completed, agreement reached, and an implementation plan is followed	X% of early childhood teachers have X level of education
			b) More early care and education professionals have access to ongoing education and training to meet their professional development requirements and goals across Arizona.	Ratio of available community-based education courses and community college courses that articulate to bachelor degree programs compared to demand for such courses	X% of early childhood assistant teachers have X level of education
			c) More early care and education professionals across Arizona have degrees and/or credentials in early care and education.	% of early childhood professionals enrolled in coursework that leads to a degree	X% of early childhood directors have X level of education
					% or # of early childhood professionals entering the field
					X% of early childhood professionals remain in the field of early childhood for at least 5 years
					X% of early childhood



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	<p>E. High quality professionals are recruited and retained in the early childhood system.</p> <p>F. Early childhood professionals are paid commensurate with other fields requiring similar education and experience.</p>	<p>2. Recruitment and Retention of Professionals in the Early Childhood System - Convene partners, provide leadership, and provide funding for the recruitment, adequate compensation, and retention of high quality, culturally diverse early childhood providers.</p>	<p>a) More high quality professionals are entering and remaining in the early education, child development, and health system across Arizona.</p> <p>b) More early care and education professionals across Arizona are compensated at a rate commensurate with other fields requiring similar education and experience.</p> <p>c) There are more qualified early care and education professionals who reflect the diversity of the community in which they practice.</p>	<p>% or # of early childhood professionals entering the field</p> <p>X% of early childhood professionals remain in the field of early childhood for at least 5 years</p> <p>X% of early childhood teachers have an annual income (full time) that is X% of the median family income</p> <p>% of early childhood professionals by race and ethnicity</p>	<p>teachers have an annual income (full time) that is X% of the median family income</p> <p>% of early childhood professionals by race and ethnicity</p> <p>X% of health care providers with specialized training</p>
	<p>G. Arizona has sufficient numbers of health services providers of all types who have had specialized training in working with young children and their families.</p>	<p>3. Specialized Training for Health Services Providers - Collaborate with partners to provide funding and implement strategies for increasing the number of health services providers who have had specialized training in working with young children and their families.</p>	<p>a) More health services providers of all types have had specialized training in working with young children and their families across Arizona.</p>	<p>X% of health care providers with specialized training</p>	<p>X% of family support providers with specialized training</p>
	<p>H. Family support providers have the knowledge and skills required to work with young children and their families.</p>	<p>4. Specialized Training for Family Support Providers - Collaborate with partners to provide funding and implement strategies for increasing the number of family support providers who have knowledge and skills required to work with young children and their families.</p>	<p>a) More family support providers have had specialized training in working with young children and their families across Arizona.</p>	<p>X% of family support providers with specialized training</p>	



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5. The early childhood system is high quality, child and family centered, coordinated, integrated, and comprehensive.	<p>A. Partners in the early childhood system have clearly defined and well understood roles and responsibilities; planning, program development, service delivery, data, and resources are coordinated among federal, state, tribal and local jurisdictions.</p> <p>B. Partners in the early childhood system work together to identify and attain the capacity required to build and sustain the system.</p> <p>C. Families of young children and other partners are involved in the design and evaluation of Arizona’s early childhood system.</p>	<p>1. Early Childhood System Leadership - Convene partners, provide leadership, and provide funding for the conceptualization and implementation of a high quality, child and family centered, coordinated, integrated, and comprehensive early childhood system that includes clearly defined roles and responsibilities.</p>	<p>a) Arizona’s comprehensive early childhood system (that goes beyond early care and education) is clearly described and roles and responsibilities of those involved in its implementation are defined.</p>	<p>A comprehensive early childhood system plan is completed, agreement reached, and an implementation plan is followed.</p>	<p>X% of children are at X level of Kindergarten readiness</p>
			<p>b) Agencies and organizations involved in the early childhood system have a common understanding of the system and share ownership in its implementation.</p>		
			<p>c) Funding for all aspects of the early childhood system is identified and aligned.</p>	<p>Evidence-based standards of practice are implemented across all programs in the early childhood system.</p>	<p>X% of families indicate that services meet the needs of their family</p>
			<p>d) More programs serving young children and their families are using evidence-based practices.</p>		
			<p>e) There are standards of practice for all child development, health, and education programs and more programs are operating in alignment with these standards.</p>		
			<p>f) Child development, health, and education providers are more effectively connecting families to the supports and services they need.</p>		
			<p>g) More families are involved in the development of policies and cross-system coordination activities.</p>		
	<p>D. There is a coordinated process in use for collecting, analyzing, and utilizing accurate and relevant data related to early childhood development, health, and education and results are used to guide decision making.</p>	<p>2. Coordinated Use of Early Childhood System Data – Convene and collaborate with partners to identify data needs and resources; define and carry out roles related to collecting, analyzing, and reporting data; and utilize data to design, develop, plan, and evaluate the early childhood system.</p>	<p>a) Data needed to inform and guide program and policy decisions at the state and local level are available, coordinated, and utilized.</p>	<p>Resources, timelines and coordination required to collect, disseminate and interpret data are identified.</p>	



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	<p>E. Early childhood programs, services, and resources are evaluated and results used to foster continuous improvement.</p> <p>F. The early childhood system as a whole is evaluated to determine if it is child and family centered, coordinated, integrated, and comprehensive and results are used to strengthen the system and guide future planning.</p> <p>G. Impact of the early childhood system on children and families is evaluated and results are used to guide policy development, public awareness messages, resource allocation, and future planning.</p>	<p>3. Early Childhood System Evaluation - Provide leadership in the evaluation of the early childhood system and collaborate with partners to utilize the results to foster continuous improvement of the system.</p>	<p>a) There is a comprehensive evaluation of the early childhood system and results are used for continuous improvement of the system.</p>	<p>A comprehensive plan for evaluating the early care and education system is completed, agreement reached, and an implementation plan is followed.</p>	



				Actual indicators will be developed and available for future review	
System Outcomes	In order for the System Outcomes in Column 1 to be achieved, the following conditions must be met	In order to create these conditions in Column 2, FTF could play the following roles	If FTF plays the role described in Column 3, these are the objectives that FTF would be working toward	Example Short to Mid-term Indicators of Success	Example Mid to Long-term Indicators of Success
6. All Arizonans understand the importance of the early years and the impact of early childhood development, health, and education on Arizona's economy and quality of life and, as a result, substantially support early childhood development, health, and education both politically and financially.	A. Arizonans receive accurate and data-based information on the importance of the early years, the link between early childhood experiences and subsequent success in school and in life, and the impact of early childhood development, health, and education on the state's economy and quality of life. B. Faith-based communities, community-based organizations, foundations, businesses, and other partners demonstrate their support for early childhood development, health, and education and convey their support to elected officials and other policy makers. C. Elected officials and other policy makers actively support early childhood development, health, and early education.	1. Building Public Awareness and Support - Convene partners, provide leadership, and provide funding for efforts to increase public awareness of and support for early childhood development, health, and early education among partners, public officials, policy makers, and the public.	a) The public is aware of the benefits of investing in early childhood development, health, and early education. b) The public is committed to a unified early childhood policy agenda that benefits young children and their families. c) There is a strong, growing, and mobilized pool of early childhood champions in all sectors.	X% of Arizonans rank early childhood issues as important X% of Arizonans understand the importance of quality early childhood experiences for brain development X% of Arizonans understand the importance of quality early childhood experiences to success in school	X% of Arizonans rank early childhood issues as important X% of Arizonans understand the importance of quality early childhood experiences for brain development X% of Arizonans understand the importance of quality early childhood experiences to success in school
	D. Resources required to develop and sustain the early childhood system are generated from public and private sources.	2. Early Childhood System Funding – Secure, coordinate, and advocate for resources required to develop and sustain the early childhood system.	a) Increase public and private funding to build and sustain the early childhood system.	X% of the funds identified as critical or necessary are available	X% of the funds identified as critical or necessary are available



Key Findings and Recommendations

Arizona Readiness Assessment Project

April 2010

Prepared by

The BUILD Initiative

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I. Introduction

Local and state policy, program, and advocacy leaders in Arizona are increasing their focus on issues related to early childhood and school readiness, including efforts to create comprehensive policy frameworks that can help the state align its early learning, child care, child health, family support and other policies that affect young children and their families. To help frame appropriate next steps, the Virginia G. Piper Charitable Trust and Helios Education Foundation sponsored a research project led by the BUILD Initiative to get a candid assessment of the state's readiness to pursue early childhood systems development work.

The purposes of the assessment are to:

- create a common knowledge base about Arizona's strengths and weaknesses in key components of early childhood systems building such as financing, governance, and public engagement;
- create a common knowledge base about Arizona's progress so far on key aspects of its early childhood agenda;
- assess stakeholder perspectives regarding First Things First's (FTF) role as a lead partner for early childhood systems building; and
- help guide any future efforts toward systemic change in Arizona.

The BUILD Initiative was created by a group of foundation leaders to facilitate the efforts of states toward systems development, using cutting edge insights from national experts and a vibrant peer community of eager learners and leaders. BUILD is honored to provide insights from research and recommendations to Arizona regarding potential next steps on the journey toward early childhood systems development.

II. Methodology

To achieve the purposes, the BUILD Initiative conducted two parallel processes of information gathering.

1. A series of 22 key informant interviews using an interview protocol expressly designed for Arizona (see Appendix A) was conducted in mid-January through late-February 2010. The interviews lasted 30 to 75 minutes each. From the interviews, BUILD gleaned perceived strengths and weaknesses of key components of systems building, specifically in the areas of financing, governance, and public engagement. The interviews also helped BUILD assess key informants' perspectives on FTF's role in Arizona's systems building work.
2. An anonymous, web-based survey of state and local-level early childhood leaders was sent in February 2010. The survey was designed to capture perceptions regarding the state's

strengths and weaknesses and respondents' own respective roles in early childhood policy making; the nature and focus of various groups and agencies and the relationships that exist among them; the strengths and weaknesses of FTF as a lead agency in systems-building; the feasibility of fundamental change; top priorities for action; and other variables.

Informants were leaders in early childhood programs and associations, community building, education, health, government, advocacy, business, and philanthropy.

Interviews with Key Informants

Staff and consultants from the BUILD Initiative, representatives from the two sponsors organizations, and key leaders from Arizona worked together to create a list of potential key informants for the interviews. Twenty-six key informants were initially contacted in January 2010; four key informants declined to be interviewed. One key informant, a state legislator, declined due to lack of availability during legislative session. Three other key informants, (a prominent figure from higher education, a government leader on economic and funding issues, and a visible leader from education) declined, stating they did not see how they would be of service to a research project focused on early childhood issues since their area of work was not early childhood specifically. This signals a potential disconnect between and among segments of the education continuum (early childhood, K-12 public school, and higher education).

The 22 key informants interviewed represented business, philanthropy, FTF, child care professionals (including private child care and Head Start), higher education, professional development, evaluation and data, policy (both from inside and outside government), advocacy, and government (including federal, gubernatorial, and agency) and the perspective of tribal member as well as from regions across the state (e.g. Maricopa County, northern Arizona, and southern Arizona).

Because interviews were conducted when Arizona's legislature was in-session, budget cuts were on the forefront of many of the key informants' minds. Feelings of being overwhelmed with how to deal with the reductions were widespread; many conveyed sadness on behalf of the children and families who would feel the impact of the cuts. Several key informants struggled to answer the questions about vision and policy priorities that need more attention. Many said much work is needed just to regain footing to get to the point where the early childhood movement was before legislative session. Thus, the timing of the interviews colored the responses from many key informants.

Based on the overall purposes of the research project, common themes prevailed about: (a) the opportunities as well as challenges and barriers to systems building efforts moving forward; (b) the important policy priorities that need more intentional work; (c) opinions, hopes, and concerns regarding leadership.

Surveys

In addition to the interviews, information was also collected from state and local early childhood stakeholders to get a pulse on opinions about the policy environment, the relationship among

players, and the perceived opportunities and barriers. Designed specifically for Arizona, the survey elicited information about the system areas upon which respondents' organizations focus, top policy priority areas, and the opportunities and barriers related to future policy work. Other questions sought to understand the progress respondents felt had been made toward advancing a comprehensive system and the degree to which collaboration among agencies had improved over the past several years.

An online survey was administered to 84 early childhood leaders, identified through the same mechanisms as the interview informants. Fifty-seven surveys were completed (68% completion rate). Of the 57, almost one half of the respondents identified themselves as non-profit leaders (46%). Another quarter identified as state leaders (26%). Only 4 respondents work at state agencies (7%).

III. Key Messages

Key messages gleaned from the interviews and surveys are:

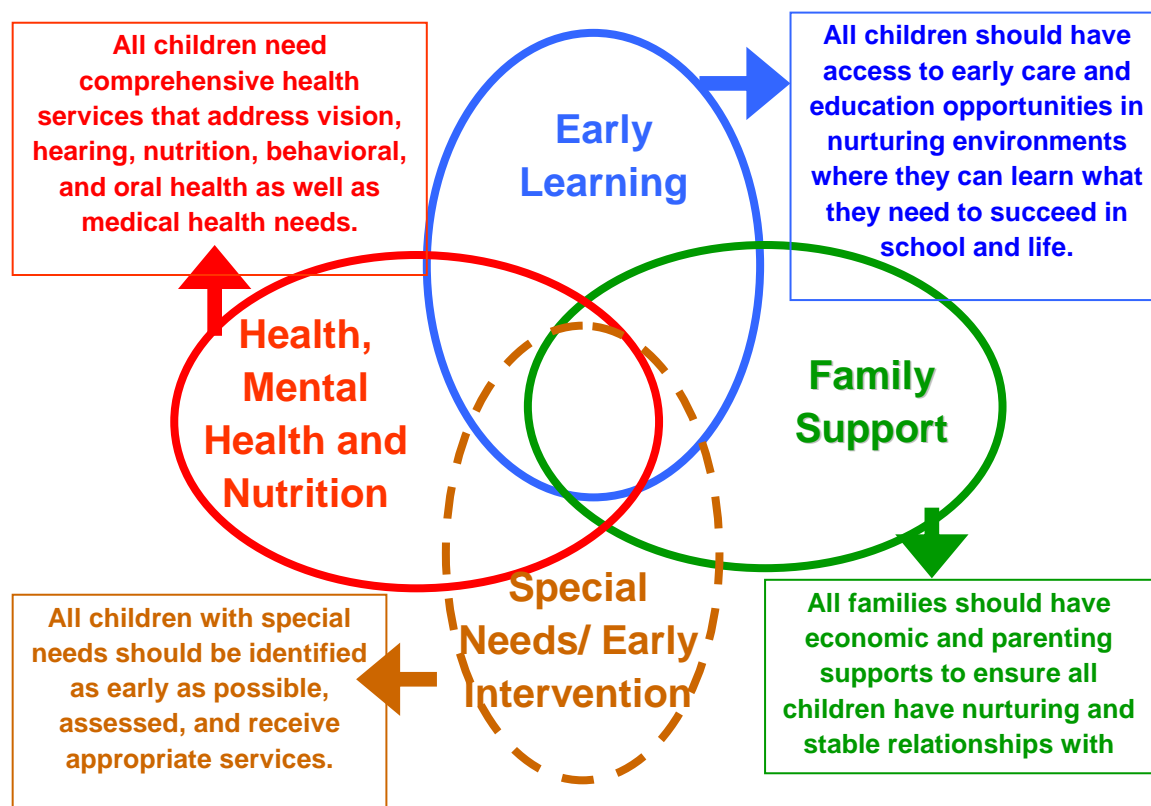
- 1) Belief in the importance of First Things First is strong and overwhelmingly a source of great optimism for respondents, yet issues of sustainability raise grave concerns.
- 2) Despite the fiscal and political challenges, as well as the "silo effect" of planning, operations and implementation – indeed perhaps *because* of these factors – respondents demonstrate clear recognition of the importance of comprehensive early childhood systems building. They also acknowledge that systems building work takes great will, requires immense commitment, and is difficult, complicated work.
- 3) Respondents perceive the lack of early childhood leadership in the legislature and executive branch as a significant barrier.
- 4) The state budget crisis and cuts to early childhood services is "high stakes;" respondents see the current fiscal climate as an undoing of the progress made in recent years and have serious concerns about how to regain footing from 1-3 years ago.

IV. National Perspective on Systems–Building

Systemic change is complex, non-linear and inherently political. But the potential payoffs are huge: improved school readiness of children and more stable, high-functioning families.

Research indicates that for children to thrive and be ready for school by age six and reading by third grade, they must first reach critical benchmarks in health and well-being. Families and communities are the primary source of support for children to reach these benchmarks. However, they are augmented

State Early Childhood Development System



in important ways by several support systems including primary and preventive health care, special needs, and quality early care and education. The lack of a coordinated, systemic response in each of these areas creates obstacles for families and communities to succeed in helping their children thrive and preparing them for a lifetime of learning. It is important to forge strong connections and align policies both among the system “ovals” and between the state and local levels.

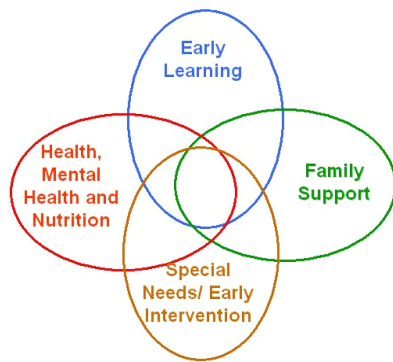
As the movement to build comprehensive early childhood systems has grown across the country, state leaders have been able to describe the nature of their work with greater specificity. This is helping advocates to communicate more effectively with funders and policy makers about what needs to be done to improve outcomes for children and families. Efforts to build political will for early childhood funding, for example, are vastly different from efforts to improve child care quality; they require different skill sets, messages, training models and local delivery systems. To help capture this new thinking and organize it in a way that is useful to both private and public-sector leaders, the Build Initiative created a typology of systems work that describes five different types of systems-building efforts: Context, Components, Connections, Infrastructure and Scale. The model provides examples of each type of work, and also suggests different ways to frame and evaluate progress. States may have the opportunity or necessity to focus on one or more of these efforts at any given time; progress will rarely be linear along the continuum reflected in this chart.



The framework makes clear that successful systems change requires:

Context of agreement on need to build a system—this harkens back to BUILD’s Theory of Change focused on recognition of need, shared early learning vision, political leadership, capacity and expertise and public awareness and support.

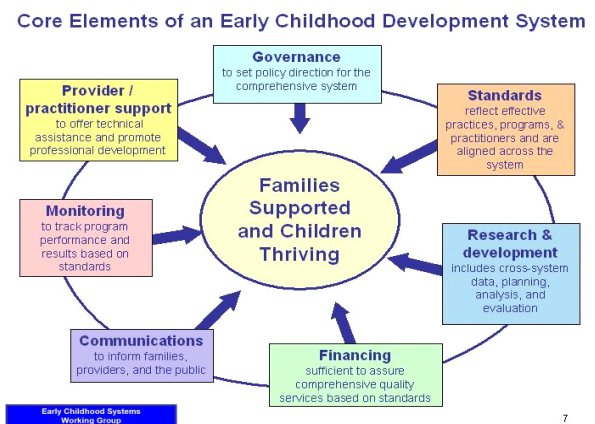
Development of **components**, i.e. programs and services in early care and education, family support, early intervention, and child health, mental health and nutrition.



Establishment of **connections** across components to align work and achieve overall goals—BUILD often represents this by the overlap of the four ovals (shown to the left).

Development of **infrastructure** to govern and support change.

(Elements of infrastructure shown to the right.)



And, taking the system to **scale**, ensuring a comprehensive system is available to as many people as possible so it produces broad and inclusive results for system beneficiaries.

Early childhood systems-building has become an intensive focus for states across the country. The number of interested states and the intensity with which they are approaching systems development has increased in recent months, resulting from a number of dynamics. First of all, the emphasis on investments in early childhood development in the Obama administration has heralded a federal agenda incorporating strategies such as implementation of Early Childhood Advisory Councils, tied to grant funding that encourages systemic planning and accountability. The focus on longitudinal data systems and funding to support them has further intensified efforts to align early childhood with the K-12 system, enhancing relationships between and among those arenas and broadening the view of what early learning is all about. And finally, tough economic times and tightening budgets have pushed state leaders to utilize strategies of consolidation and efficiency in an effort to maximize existing resources. Offices of Early Childhood Development are increasingly being seen as a smart strategy that can put into practice theoretical and conceptual conversations about coordinated

systems. These dynamics have motivated states to think deeply about how to use these challenges and the opportunities to facilitate systems development.

And yet, systems-building is difficult and never linear. Even states that are pioneers in this realm have struggled to put intentions into action and to genuinely integrate the “four ovals,” actualizing a comprehensive system that seamlessly meets the continuum of young children’s needs from birth to school entry. States have developed different models to address the objectives, largely dependent upon the existing political and economic landscape; a lack of consistency hinders clear “how to” guidance for states. Progress and practice are largely achieved through peer learning among states, utilizing generous feedback from state leaders sharing the good, bad, and ugly about their experiences in crafting policies and programs that integrate and align services and resources across early learning, health/mental health, family support, and special needs.

The unique funding stream created by Proposition 203 in 2006 in Arizona provides a hopeful example of broad citizen support and innovative action for early childhood investment for states across the country. While the task of building the system utilizing these precious resources and many partners remains difficult, tedious, and slow-going, the steps taken in Arizona toward putting the essential infrastructure in place is an enormous achievement, watched and admired by state leaders across the United States.

V. Observations in Arizona

As states approach systems development, we must recognize that this work requires a paradigm shift in two critical areas: leadership and culture. The following outlines observations drawn from experience in numerous states as well as the research recently conducted in Arizona, with an eye to recommendations for potential next steps for Arizona leaders.

It is important to note dynamics of the timing of the research. First, the research was conducted during the intensive period of time that the state was in the throes of budget determinations. The hard reality of potential and continued cuts was clearly weighing heavily on the minds of respondents. Secondly, the research was initially commissioned and the interviews and surveys conducted prior to the legislative move to put the future of FTF funds back on the ballot in November. While interviewees and survey respondents expressed fears of sustainability when considering perhaps a ten year window of funding for FTF, community advocates and leaders now face a much more dire and immediate threat.

Leadership

In order for systems building to be ultimately successful, leadership is required at many levels,

including either legislative or gubernatorial, among agency heads and mid-level managers in state agencies, and within and across state, regional and local level organizations as well as across public and private sectors. For sustainability, leadership must not depend on any one individual, organization, or sector.

The early childhood agenda in Arizona should be led and implemented by a strong leadership team, involving a partnership of credible, respected, and capable organizations and champions – both public and private - working from a clear, unified agenda. No one organization should solely carry the responsibilities of leading a state’s early childhood agenda; the stakes are too high and the landscape too uncertain.

A leadership network strengthens the agenda and makes success more likely through diversification and expansion of support. Expanding the base of leadership extends not only the accountability for progress/performance, but also the capacity for securing investment, building political will, and establishing a broad base of public understanding, will and support.

Especially because of the voter support that gave rise to it, First Things First could play a key and convening role in this partnership, but should not be seen nor should act as the sole organization leading the cause. The vast majority of respondents view First Things First as the organization most positioned to lead, and overwhelmingly expressed optimism about its leadership, capacity and capabilities. Respondents also had constructive comments suggesting recognition of the benefits of inclusive approaches to leading and implementing systems building in Arizona; the important role, perspectives, and expertise of a range of partners/leaders; and shared responsibility for development and implementation of a strong, comprehensive early childhood system.

Private funders have played, and continue to play, a key role in the development of the early learning systems in pioneering states across the country. Initial or seed investments in specific aspects of a system by philanthropic partners, such as quality rating and improvement systems or data systems, have provided the impetus for initiatives that can then be embraced and enhanced by public sector leadership and participation. As key partners in public-private approaches to systems building, private funders have made these investments, in part, out of a belief that their investments would leverage additional public funds for young children – and to some extent those expectations have begun to be met in many states. But leadership for young children by the state’s elected officials in Arizona has proven elusive, and is likely to require more energy and investment by the private sector.

Leadership at the legislative and gubernatorial level must be intentionally cultivated. Respondents were clearly deflated about the dearth of leadership in these two arenas. Efforts to educate and advocate have seemed futile to many informants, yet advocates must redouble their efforts and strategies for building support within the legislature and among elected offices. This takes time and

intensive strategies involving one-on-one communication and meticulously crafted case-by-case efforts.

Culture

The cultural shift that must occur for successful systems building requires - first and foremost - a clear vision, developed through an inclusive, transparent process and articulated in a long range (multi-year) strategic plan. Solidified in an effective system of assessment, data, evaluation, and analysis, the plan becomes an accountability framework that must be embraced and supported by the full range of leadership partners and beyond. Articulation of anticipated strategies and costs over time would facilitate understanding of fund management.

Respondents were clear in their articulation of a desire for systems building. There was a lack of clarity, however, when it came to voicing how that might happen or could look. This ambivalence could signal either/both lack of understanding of how a system is built or/and how to set aside individual agendas to genuinely support systems development.

Systems integration and innovation require change; financing must shift, and constituents will find that traditional support structures for specific programs may transition to higher performing programs or activities. Organizations may evolve, merge, or reinvent. Individuals may find their own roles, responsibilities, and job security in transition. Setting aside organizational and individual agendas to fully accept and embrace an agenda for the common good can go against the grain of human nature and create great fear and concern. **Creating an environment where systems development can happen necessitates supporting partners in weathering and adapting to change.** This involves creating a culture where the benefits of a shared vision and unified agenda are very clear, and all partners can easily envision the positive impact on families and young children in Arizona.

VI. Recommendations for Next Steps

While Arizona has opportunities and achievements along the full continuum of systems building efforts, our recommendations for Arizona's immediate next steps in its systems building journey fall squarely into two of the key systems efforts described above: **context** and **infrastructure**.

- A. In order to establish an effective partnership of leaders, we recommend a carefully facilitated process. We illustrate the facilitated process unfolding in the following ways as an example, but another process could be designed that meets the same needs:
 - First Things First (potentially the ECAC/FTF board) would extend invitations to peer organizations/leaders to participate in the "conference" process.* Participants of the

process would include representation from state and local/regional level public agencies, private/non-profit organizations, the Governor's office, and the legislature. It may also be strategic to reconsider composition of the ECAC to align with this process and partnership, ensuring local representation.

- Philanthropic partners could host the sessions and guide the facilitation using a capable, out-of-state professional. Carefully planned and executed, the process could occur over a three-month timeline.
- The process would:
 - result in a partnership structure and agreement for decision-making;
 - clarify role, formalize responsibilities, and accountability for each partner (formally/officially through MOUs, for example);
 - affirm guiding principles;
 - establish a clear shared vision, articulated in a coherent strategic plan with specific timelines and benchmarks;
 - discern clear data system accountability and reporting mechanisms; and
 - secure agreement on immediate policy priorities.

The purpose of the process is NOT to create new content or a new strategic plan, but to affirm the partnership vision and intentionally conduct the important journey to consensus.

- The process would create a safe environment for targeted discussions addressing ongoing leadership development and strategies for candidly mediating issues of turf, competition, and fears and doubts regarding change. This conversation will not be a one-time shot, but rather the beginning of an ongoing, candid dialogue.
- The process and resulting partnership would exhibit great transparency and commitment to clear and timely communication with all stakeholders at both the state and local levels.

**We recognize that First Things First has recently initiated and will soon conclude with a task force effort around a strategic plan. The process we have recommended would not be duplicative of this very promising effort, but would enhance and enrich the projected strategic vision to achieve these additional objectives. The current strategic planning process could easily bridge to a focus on next steps, specifically addressing component areas and creating an effective shared leadership structure through formalized agreement to roles and responsibilities of each partner.*

B. We recommend development and implementation of an advocacy and communications plan, springing from the vision of the newly formed partnership and unified strategic plan. Agreement must be reached on a set of near-term policy priorities for building public and political support for early childhood, which can be promoted in a unified policy/advocacy agenda.

- While the consensus agenda will be coordinated by the partnership, the advocacy efforts would be executed by a bi-partisan group of high level corporate executives and community leaders, carefully cultivated by philanthropic and partnership leaders. One-on-one discussions and relationships between business champions and key legislative contacts must be nurtured in an effort to build an intentional, sustained demonstration of support for and education about early childhood investments.
- A strategy that has been utilized effectively in other states has been bringing national experts to talk with legislative and administration leaders, both in large scale “summits” and in small, focused sessions. Cutting-edge research from renowned experts such as Jack Shonkoff, coupled with return-on-investment data and succinct information about Arizona’s challenges and opportunities, provide inarguable evidence of the benefits of early childhood investment.
- A plan of targeted messaging, effective messengers, and key audiences must be developed and consistently applied to build sustained will and support for the early childhood agenda and investments from key constituencies. The call to action (specific to each audience) must be crystal clear. As with any effective social marketing effort, care must be taken to relieve the perception of self-serving motivation by organizations underwriting the campaign.

We recognize that Expect More Arizona is a communications effort in process. Only one informant in our research mentioned the initiative, perhaps signaling - at least for this audience - a lack of awareness, interest, or understanding of the relevance to early childhood initiatives. While it would be a stretch to conclude ineffectiveness of the messages or format of delivery by Expect More from this case example, it may be prudent to probe deeper to assess audience effectiveness of the communications initiative and ways to more effectively support awareness and education regarding the benefits of early childhood investment.

C. Given strong evidence of key aspects of readiness in Arizona, we recommend that Arizona assertively pursue systems building to make the most of the incredibly strong support of Arizona citizens, philanthropic partners, and the early childhood community and to seize the opportunities presented by the federal agenda. Some of these opportunities include the implementation of an effective early childhood advisory council, fueled by special federal

grant funding, along with the funding streams available for longitudinal data systems and potentially for innovative practices (Promising Neighborhoods, Investing in Innovation, and, hopefully, the Early Learning Challenge Fund).

It is our recommendation that Arizona pursue its systems building venture by accessing support from experts in research, content and facilitation, and by seizing opportunities for peer learning. Especially since there is no single or simple “right way” to build a system, observations from across the country and interactions with peer leaders reflect the great value of learning lessons – good, bad, and ugly - from states that have chosen this path.

Finally, we recognize that the critically important and complicated work of systems building in Arizona must persist at the same time that a primary funding base for the early childhood systems work is in question. It is our hope that this very unnerving dynamic will not deter or distract Arizona’s capable and committed leaders from moving forward at a sure pace.

Appendix A: Insights from Research

Common themes (shown in bold statements below) emerged from interviews and survey respondents, who have diverse perspectives on ECE policies, programs, and systems. These themes are explored within four broad categories: priorities and progress for young children and families; political and economic environment; fault lines in Arizona; and landscape of leadership.

Priorities and Progress for Young Children and their Families

Just as the needs of young children cross inter-related domains of growth and development, component areas of services and programs are varied, and too often function separately and ineffectively if not seen as part of an integrated system. In responding to questions regarding component areas of services and programs for families and young children, survey completers expressed their opinions about issues that should be priorities, issues that are receiving inadequate attention, and issues that are gaining momentum in Arizona.

A large percentage of respondents agreed that high quality, affordable, accessible child care should be a major priority in Arizona (67%); a little over a third of stakeholders agreed that creating a highly skilled workforce should be a major priority (37%). Two categories both received 29% of respondents' endorsements. They were 1) child health and mental health and 2) creating a coherent state-level governance system. Table 1 presents additional findings on respondents' vision for priorities.

There were some additional comments made in regard to these prioritized issues.

As I read this list, I realized that state government should make ALL of these a priority. I believe that all of the indicators are parts of a larger system of Early Childhood Education that is critical to the development of this state.

Healthy mothers and children have to be our first priority. After that, children and families need excellent support services and early care and education programs.

Respondents were also asked to describe some of the issues gaining momentum in Arizona. The majority of these open-ended responses focused on “negative momentum” in the state that comes from a fear of losing even more funding for early childhood programs.

I'm not sure that any early childhood issues are generating momentum currently - we are headed for a train wreck for young families and as a state and I fear that everyone is becoming inured to it.

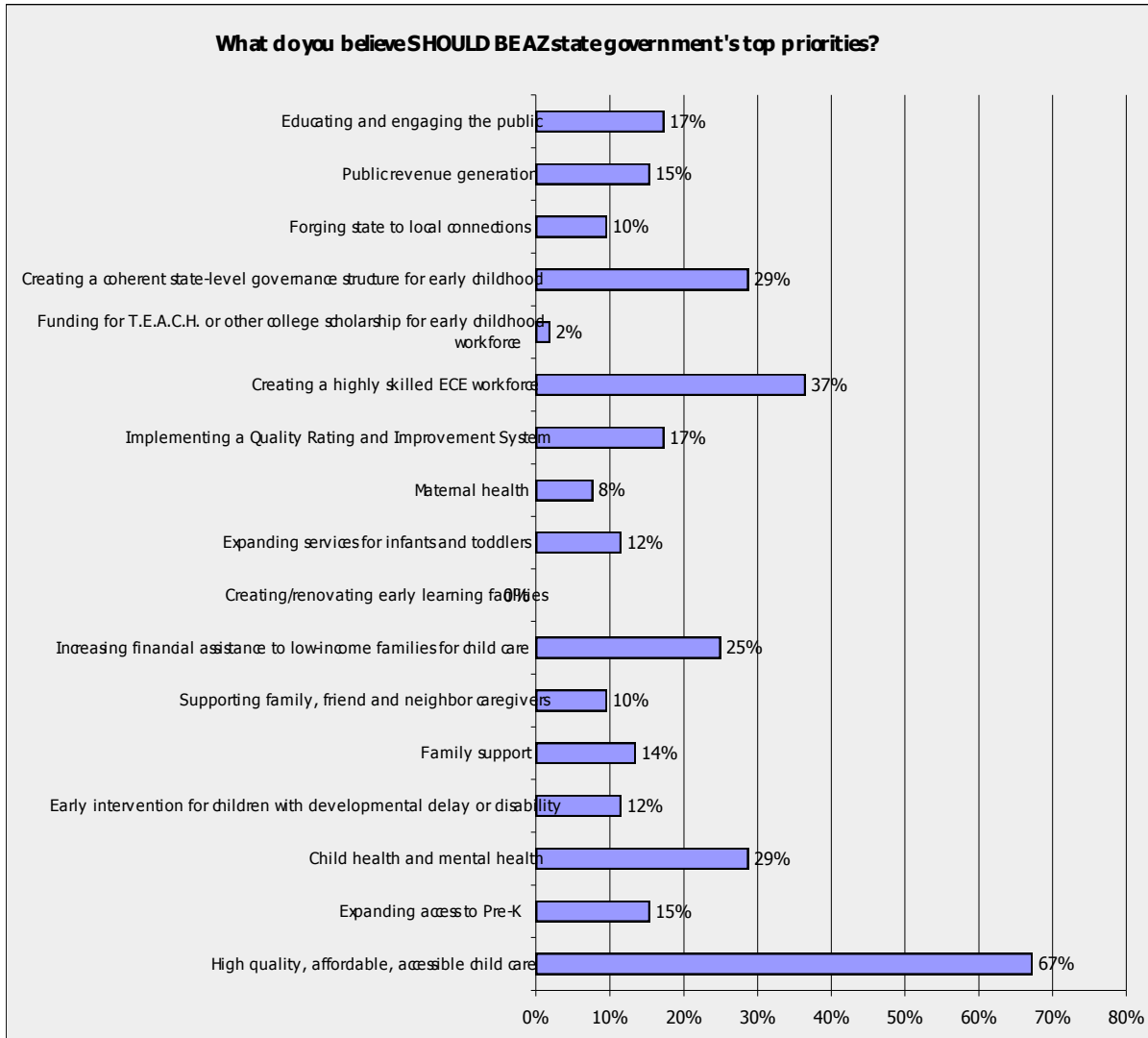
What is the opposite of momentum? Outside of those of us working on First Things First projects, there seems to be little interest in our state to improve early childhood. The focus is on cutting back wherever possible.

Unfortunately, cutting funding for early childhood is what is gaining momentum.

Saving First Things First.

Frankly, I don't see a lot of forward momentum anywhere; in fact there is very little holding the line anywhere that I can see. Certainly there is a lot of talk about Quality Rating, childcare subsidies, and young child and maternal health care. But generating momentum??? Nada.

Table 1



Respondents were asked to rate to what extent various early childhood issues were making progress or receiving inadequate attention in the system component areas of early learning, family support, child health, and special needs. With regard to early learning, none of the issues were rated as being a “strong” state priority. In terms of “medium” priority, the top issues were:

- Quality improvement activities – 45%
- Child care regulations and monitoring – 45%

- Scholarships and training opportunities for EC professionals – 43%
- Quality Rating and Improvement System – 35%

The survey included questions asking respondents to rate priorities in the state in the areas of family support (such as income supports, home visiting, and maternal depression), child health (such as health insurance, accessibility of primary health services, and parental substance abuse), and special needs (such as assessments, autism, and screening and referral). The majority of respondents rated all the issues as having a “low priority” in the state.

Respondents’ open-ended comments reflected a dichotomous feeling that while the state – in general – was neglectful of young children and families, there were positive things happening with First Things First.

Overall, I think the needs for children have always been and continue to be a low priority for Arizona as a state. Good work is being done by agencies and FTF within the state, but I see that as at odds with those who hold the power (the money).

I believe that these are all issues that a few targeted ECE advocates and parts of agencies, and some other ECE stakeholders are working on, but overall these things are not made priorities and Arizona is taking huge steps BACKWARDS in regards to some of these individual indicators.

As I said previously, Arizona doesn't value any of the above items. FTF does, but FTF is not the state of AZ.

This is a tough question. If you ask in terms of FTF, most of these things are on their radar...but that doesn't represent the legislature's radar. I think these issues are only on their radar when they can gain something (such as federal funds without match requirements) from it.

On a more positive note, respondents had plenty to say about issues that represent areas of progress and opportunities for progress in creating a comprehensive early childhood system in Arizona. The survey asked two questions in this regard:

1. *Thinking of strides made in Arizona in the last few years toward meeting the needs of young children and their families, what are the top 2 or 3 points of progress?*
2. *In your opinion, what issue represents the greatest area of opportunity for progress in creating a comprehensive early childhood system in Arizona?*

The vast majority of responses in both these questions revolved around First Things First. For the first question, respondents acknowledged that the passage of Proposition 203, which led to the creation of First Things First, was a major victory for young children and their families. The following statements highlight this overwhelming sentiment:

The passage of First Things First was a major point of progress, and the movement toward a statewide quality rating system for child care is another.

Raising funds via First Things First, increasing quality through the QIRS, and increasing awareness of need and opportunities for professional development.

First Things First progress being made not only statewide but also at the local level.

Respondents also felt that great strides have also been made in the areas of professional development, increasing awareness of mental health needs of very young children, and Arizona's new Quality Rating and Improvement System (QRIS) – Quality First!

When it came to describing opportunities for potential progress, the focus was again on the role of First Things First. Most of the respondents conveyed a sense of hopefulness if Arizonans are able to “save” First Things First and leverage the money to build a cohesive system with other partners – both public and private. Here are some examples of statements and represent this theme.

FTF has the potential to build an effective EC system, especially since it has local and statewide representation and community-level input and influence.

Collaboration, non-duplication, and sharing resources.

FTF has the opportunity to stand up and lead. Some can be done at the local level, but it must convene people around the agenda, move it forward and communicate the vision and progress.

Leveraging FTF to build the system with the other partners.

Political and Economic Environment

The lack of early childhood leadership in the legislature is a significant challenge.

An overwhelming majority of key informants (17 of 22 interviewed) specifically named the legislature as a huge obstacle if not paramount barrier to achieving gains in ECE investments and policies. Additionally, at least 6 key informants discussed the lack of leadership from the current governor and administrative branch as a significant challenge. While there was some acknowledgement that mending the gaping state deficit requires tough decisions, there was more widely expressed sentiment that policymakers do not fundamentally value ECE due to deep, value-laden beliefs that: ECE is not a serious matter (i.e. “it is just babysitting”); ECE is a private family matter; mothers should stay at home and handle parenting; and government does not have responsibility or any philosophical reason to fund ECE.

Survey respondents, too, almost unanimously rated the strength of both the executive and legislative branches of government as “weak” or “non-existent” in meeting the needs of children and families.

At least two key informants acknowledged there are currently a handful of legislators that could be considered ECE champions. However, given those legislators are part of the minority party during a time of unprecedented fiscal challenges, they have no real authority or incentive to create meaningful change and endure the political battles such efforts would require.

Some key informants believe ECE leaders are grouped with the human service and spending lobby in the minds of legislators and believe portraying a more centrist, sophisticated image through linkages with issue bases like community and economic development would be wise. Others believe if more public awareness could be spread about the benefits of FTF, then greater public will could be built, resulting in greater pressure on the legislature.

Related to the lack of leadership from the governor’s office, a couple of key informants recognized the difficult circumstances the current governor, Gov. Jan Brewer (R, 2009-current), inherited. For instance, she inherited an intense budget shortfall and took office on the heels of an ECE maverick. A government insider commented that Gov. Brewer and staff are always willing to capitalize on opportunities to connect with ECE. For instance, in the Race to the Top grant process, staff was intentional about connecting with preschool even though that was not a federal requirement. In general, the sense is that FTF will provide leadership on ECE and that government is currently overwhelmed with problems to solve and lowered capacity due to layoffs.

Overall, there was a clear sentiment that the lack of leadership from the legislature, and to some degree from the governor’s office, is a colossal challenge. This lack of leadership is enmeshed with the state fiscal crisis resulting in devastating ECE budget cuts. This was a significant morale buster for ECE leaders and was vividly on the minds of key informants given the timing of the interviews during legislative session.

The economic situation is an enormous challenge.

In addition to lack of political leadership, the state of Arizona’s economy and recent budget cuts to critical ECE programs and services was a topic about which all 22 key informants had fervent and plentiful comments.

Key informants described the level of program cuts as “devastating” and said policymakers “decimated” ECE infrastructure. Most key informants categorized the state’s financial problems as long-term with no expected healthy rebound in the near future because the state economy is not diversified and the markets the state depends on for revenue are growth-based (e.g. housing

developments, retail purchases associated with real estate, and tourism).

The sting of the budget cuts coupled with the gravity of the larger economic troubles of the state made it difficult for many key informants to express their vision for what an ECE system should look like in 10 years. Many indicated they felt hopeful one to three years ago given the momentum on ECE issues, but today they feel discouraged and believe it will take serious work to make up for the losses and regain their original footing from even a year ago.

When asked about the three greatest barriers to comprehensive early childhood systems progress, respondents said:

Changes by the state legislature to be able to invade funds duly voted for by the citizens of AZ.

Lack of vision and sustained legislative commitment.

Too many players with too much turf to protect; all leading to politics and grandstanding without much progress.

Politics: the political values of current lawmakers pose a severe threat to any progress toward an effective early childhood system.

Lack of funding, lack of sustainability, lack of any of this being supported through the general funds, which is where it all should be.

The lack of leadership in the legislature and governor's office with no focus on children and families.

From this grim picture emerges evidence of a desire for hope and optimism. Two key informants said they look to FTF's leadership to convey a sense of hope. Others said because families are feeling the downturn in the economy personally, deeply, and on many levels (e.g. lost jobs or having to perform twice as much work due to workforce reductions, and/or the inability to afford child care), FTF and the ECE field have much work to do to celebrate the successes in order to feel motivated to continue fighting for the ECE movement.

Key informants from inside and outside government said the budget cuts and loss of revenue will now spotlight the need for a more efficient, streamlined system because resources will not mask the level of need for ECE services in the state. This, they say, is the greatest opportunity and can be done in step with leveraging the momentum of the ECE community that led up to FTF. It is important to note that while some key informants were able to see opportunity, most had little energy to articulate what their role might be or identify any specific tactics, strategies, or solutions for capitalizing on this opportunity.

Sustainability of First Things First's funding and infrastructure are widespread concerns.

Key informants realize that FTF and the ECE community as a whole must fight to secure a stable funding source. Several said that the interview question about what the ECE system should look like in 10 years was poignant because they believe that 10 years is about the window of opportunity to secure a funding source or else FTF will dissolve. Key informants believe funding and infrastructure are directly connected—if FTF cannot protect the majority of its funding and if revenue to replace the tobacco tax money is not secured, then FTF's infrastructure is in serious jeopardy.

Key informants are able to recognize areas that need additional work and focus. However, at the time of the interviews, not much energy or ability existed to articulate the specific ways key informants think they personally or as part of their organization can help FTF achieve sustainability. Generally, key informants seemed overwhelmed due to recent legislative activity to cut ECE program budgets. Also, the silo effect and lack of a clear, overarching ECE leader has an impact on how key stakeholders can engage in work moving forward.

While key informants may not be able to clearly identify and articulate how they will help sustain funding and infrastructure, they all seem very willing to help in the effort. All key informants made direct or indirect comments indicating they are or would help fight for FTF's preservation, and two informants said they believe the fight to preserve FTF funds is an urgent battle to which FTF must dedicate much energy.

Fault Lines in Arizona

Silos persist.

Many key informants commented that there is generally positive increased synergy among the ECE stakeholders in the past few years. Some had specific examples of success stories in cooperation such as the formation of the newly branded Arizona AEYC, the way the ECE community bonded to fight off mammoth child care licensing fee increases, and the heightened role of philanthropists in ECE work. Examples of the latter are the Arizona Community Foundation's role in funding and supporting local coalitions which set the stage for FTF's regional partnership councils and the roles played by the Virginia G. Piper Charitable Trust and Helios Education Foundation for sponsoring this research project.

While this increased synergy is perceived as a more recent achievement from the past few years, there is widespread sentiment that in order to tend to the loss of progress that recent budget cuts is causing and in order to continue efforts toward building a comprehensive ECE system, the ECE

community as a whole must work more collaboratively with systemic thinking rather than continuing to function in silos.

Nearly every key informant (19 of 22) talked about the ECE field being one of silos where the various players know little about what others are doing resulting in missed opportunities to align efforts, create a graduation of intensity for messaging and advocacy, leverage assets, and maximize resources through cross referral.

While there is strong awareness and belief held by key informants that the ECE field functions in silos for philosophical and practical reasons, there is interest in breaking out of the silos to build a more effective, comprehensive system. Key informants also recognize that systemic thinking on a widespread scale is new, necessary, and hard. The challenge is to balance what leaders see as the brutal facts of today with hope and belief that change can happen productively.

A more centrist line must be walked to evoke broader and deeper public and political will.

The majority of key informants said there is more work to be done in Arizona in “building the existing choir and looking beyond the choir all at once.” They said that strengthening the existing constellation of partners by drawing in vital constituencies such as philanthropists and business leaders as well as drawing in new, non-traditional partners such as real estate brokers, tax policy experts, and economic development strategists are areas that need more work.

They say that the way to do this is to walk a more centrist line with messaging to develop a broader base of support and mine deeper support from existing partners. For instance, several key informants said drawing intentional linkages and connections with other players that do not seem to have a lot directly and personally on the line attached to ECE funding will add credibility to the ECE movement and develop increased public and political will. In order to attract such partnerships, the ECE field must appeal to the middle. As one key informant speculated, the legislature is moving towards a 1/3 republican, 1/3 democrat, and 1/3 independent party make-up so it will be critical to have messengers that can speak to the middle.

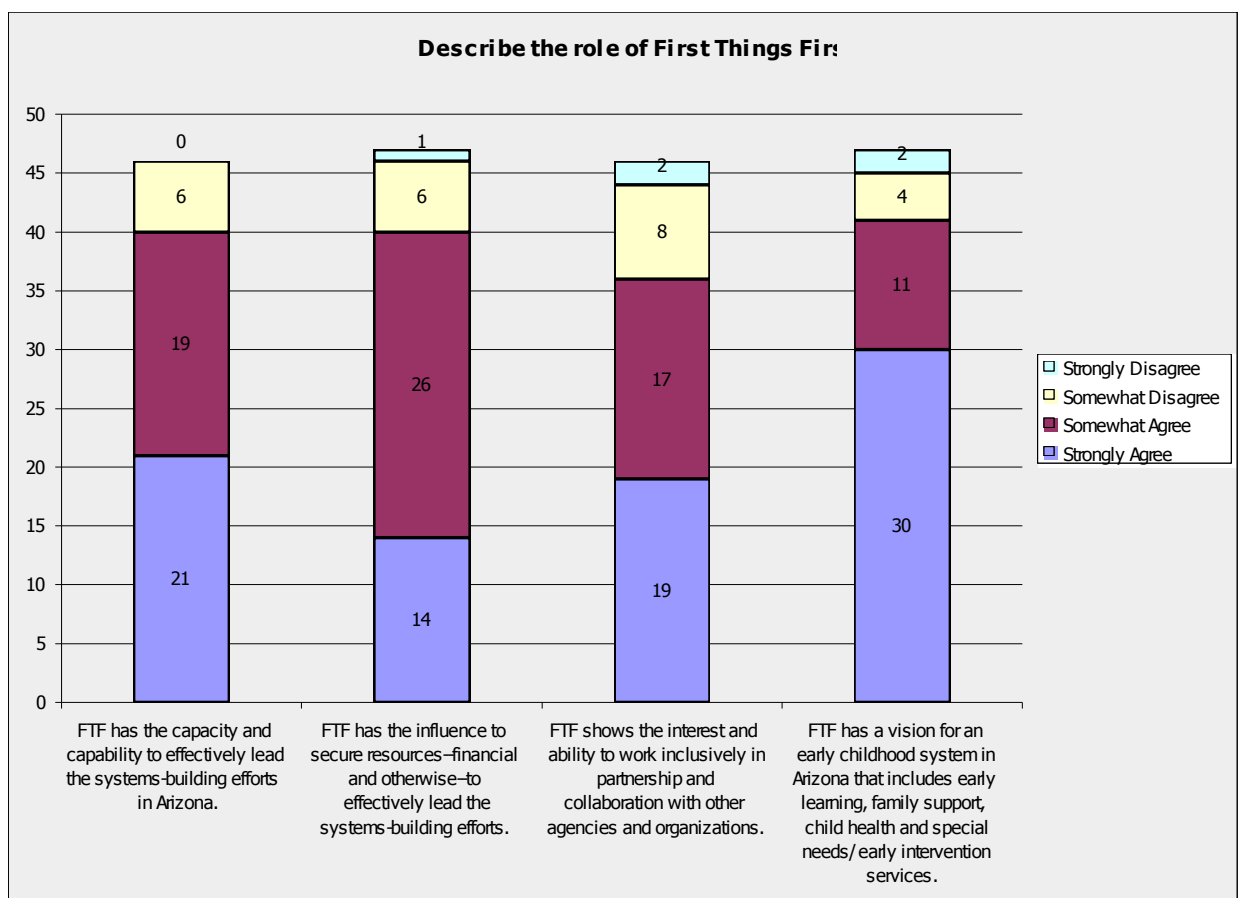
As a specific example of being more centrist, one key informant said ECE leaders must meet “business where they are” and speak to their core motivations. In this way, the K-12 constituency can also be captured because business cares deeply about the K-12 system succeeding. Business leaders are powerful, neutral messengers to build the case for the ECE to K-12 linkage. Developing stronger connections between ECE and K-12 is an area many key informants mentioned as needing more intentional work.

Landscape of Leadership

The research sought to develop an assessment of respondents' perceptions of the commitment, credibility, and interrelationship of key leaders and champions at various levels in the state, especially with regard to First Things First as a likely lead agency.

Respondents and informants gave detailed information regarding their opinions and perceptions of First Things First. The majority of respondents agreed that First Things First has the capacity and capability to lead, secure financing, work in collaboration, and hold a strong vision for systems-building efforts in Arizona. The clear endorsement of FTF's strengths is evident in Table 2.

Table 2



Even though the vast majority of respondents indicated that they have faith in First Things First to get the work done, some commented on the need for this state agency to work with others.

FTF cannot do this work alone. I believe they have the intent and the capacity, but not the capability without support.

FTF is great but can't do it alone. They need some level of buy-in from the legislature and the citizens.

Perhaps better communication and partnering with state agencies serving children such as DES/Child Care Administration.

There is role confusion.

Key informants said in considering the work that needs to be done moving forward, it is hard to assign roles for a variety of reasons. Leaders believe the ECE field has been historically fragmented and that it is still largely functioning in silos. They say what is missing is the “bird’s eye view” that can help provide objective analysis, identify gaps, spot opportunities for alignment and better articulation, and convene key stakeholders to develop a comprehensive plan to move forward. At least two key informants talked at length about the FTF systems building task force as a place this conversation is currently taking place with an impressive and diverse table of stakeholders.

While nearly every key informant points to FTF as the best entity to provide leadership for the ECE community, there are some unresolved issues that complicate FTF’s position in this role. For instance, people see FTF as an awkward configuration of inside- and outside-government so it is unclear how FTF makes room for other state agencies when they are clearly the most resourced and influential voice for ECE systems, yet are on the same playing field as other state agencies. One key informant asked: “Is FTF a part or the whole [of the ECE system]?” Additionally, another key informant said, “There is a dance happening now to figure out two things. Where does everyone else fit in when FTF is an unmatched power? And, can the priorities of key partners be incorporated early on [given this inequity in power]?”

Early childhood leadership capacity in general needs to be built at all levels across all sectors.

A large number of key informants said that leadership capacity building is an area that needs more attention and work. Four main points came up related to this concept.

First, FTF’s regional partnership councils are decision making bodies yet key informants say many of the council members have had no previous training in this realm. It is important to note that many local leaders (some who serve on FTF regional partnership councils) were interviewed and most thought the protocol for running a council meeting was too formal. One key informant said it is awkward to treat people in your community who are your friends in such a formal manner.

Second, FTF has hired much of the existing talent in ECE and there needs to be a replacement pool. A few key informants spoke of this neutrally and said it showed how “young” or new the field of ECE was to have just one or two generations of ECE leaders who have knowledge in policy, programs, systems, and/or data combined with expertise in ECE.

Third, developing leadership capacity as it relates specifically to understanding and using data by people who also understand children and program delivery is crucial as FTF launches its evaluation project.

Fourth, professional development efforts are helping to build on-the-ground leadership, strengthening the professionalism of those working with children today. The tension between the quality vision ECE systems builders have versus the current reality of the ECE provider workforce is something many key informants touched on. Key informants who work in higher education and/or with professional development programs talked at length about this juxtaposition. The main take-away is that the steps to achieve the vision must be accessible to the existing workforce and potential workforce of today.

In regards to professional development as it is tied to quality enhancement and standards, several key informants talked about the linkages between these two as critical and had related success stories. Numerous key informants categorized the following items as achievements: the creation of a four-year ECE degree at universities; the requirement that state preschool and kindergarten teachers get an ECE endorsement or certificate; increased cooperation and collaboration between community colleges (specifically the Maricopa Community College District) and the state universities; and an increase in articulation agreements between community colleges and state universities that have the students' needs in mind.

Another leadership success story several key informants mentioned was the creation of the Arizona Association for the Education of Young Children's (AEYC) new statewide brand. The local AEYC affiliates had been working successfully, although in silos, key informants said. The organizational development work to get the local affiliates to re-brand as part of a state organization is a powerful success story and one that can be capitalized on as FTF looks to build stronger partnerships with providers. Every key informant who spoke about Arizona AEYC agreed that the organization could and should be a prominent player moving forward.

An interesting conversation played out over the course of the interviews about whether Arizona's ECE leaders of today have enough exposure to national learning. Three or more people mentioned that Arizona's ECE leadership is "in-grown" with very little professional experience and educational training coming from outside Arizona. Others indicated Arizona should glean lessons learned from other states that have similar characteristics (e.g. large states with significant urban and rural populations that have challenging economic issues) and asked whether the BUILD Initiative could help with this convening and learning since there has been a lack of opportunities in this respect. Yet at least three key informants interviewed had vast experiences in other states, some with innovative programs, and were intentional about bringing that experience to Arizona. One other key informant had impressive experience at the federal level.

Systems building work should utilize the entire spectrum of leadership.

More than half a dozen key informants discussed their beliefs that systems building work needs to happen from the bottom up, not just the top down, as well as across leadership levels on particular issues.

Many talked about the need to involve the “on-the-ground” perspective from the people actually doing the work “in the trenches” to implement pieces of the larger vision as well as the individuals who are effected by policies. Others discussed system gaps that could be closed if the right people were asked to participate in the planning discussion.

They noted two key reasons why this holistic view is important. The first point is related to system integrity and longevity. Hearing from “on-the-ground” workers and leaders can help reduce negative unintended consequences because those with practical, hands-on knowledge have a strong understanding of what happens during the implementation phase. The second point is about creating a culture of valuing everyone that is part of the system. It is important to make space for input from the bottom up and across the various levels of leadership on a particular issue because it creates a culture where it is ok to ask the hard questions, sends a message that systems-builders and decision-makers really want to build a system that works well, and conveys respect for the field from systems building leaders who are in some cases perceived by key informants as elitist and/or exclusive.

Key informants indicated that the time, or point in the planning process, that systems building leaders solicit this type of input is crucial. It should be sought when a plan is being created, not after the plan is already created. There was distaste expressed by a couple of key informants for handing off a preconceived plan and tasking specific constituencies with adapting the plan to work for them rather than embracing input and participation from those constituencies from the beginning. However there were also positive mentions of how FTF state leaders conducted outreach with tribal leaders and presented tribes with options for their participation with regional partnership councils (e.g. start an independent tribal council or fold in tribal representation on an existing council).

The creation of FTF has prompted a huge culture change and a significant gap exists between the old and new.

According to every key informant interviewed, FTF as created by a voter initiative has prompted quite a culture shift in the ECE community. An overwhelming majority of interviewees agreed that there is a gap between the old culture pre-FTF and the new culture post-FTF.

This gap is comprised of differences in:

- a. processes such as grant applications. Many said there are some legitimate concerns that should be addressed about the complexity of grant applications; potential partners and participants should not be deterred from investing in quality;
- b. levels of sophistication. Some see an influx of business savvy leaders as good for ECE's public image (e.g. several key informants complimented Steve Lynn, Nadine Mathis Basha, and Rhian Evans Allvin for their professional abilities in running swift, on-topic FTF board meetings); others hint that too much protocol diminishes the local coalition's ability to run business based on good relationship mapping; and
- c. perceived value of old leadership versus new leadership where historical leaders who are long-time advocates with solid knowledge of systems may feel marginalized by new leaders who have fresh energy and vision but perhaps not a great deal of esoteric knowledge.

Key informants say FTF is an unprecedented success; nearly every key informant will point to FTF as the entity with the best positioning and widespread recognition to strongly lead the ECE community in continued systems building work. Most notably, key informants indicated FTF has the most money which is perceived as a significant feature that arms FTF, and the ECE community as a whole, with some political capital to contend with the apathy from elected officials. Yet a few key informants were reluctant to accept FTF in this role.

A handful of key informants acknowledged that FTF is an easy target to blame for challenges that arise; the reality is the ECE field needed to change and to some degree the field knew that when they were advocating for Prop 203 and the creation of FTF. They said the discomfort expressed today is often more about people trying to let go of a system they knew (albeit broken, fragmented, and not easily accessible to families) and then connect with a system they do not know. Many mentioned there is "fear" of the unknown. Discomfort, fear, and perhaps insecurity naturally comes with a significant shift in structural organization, which in FTF's case is layered with complexities caused by an economic downturn.

A healthy majority of key informants agreed that the appointment of FTF's new executive director, Rhian Evans Allvin, is perceived as a smart, positive move that makes sense given the organizational needs of FTF. Key informants believe the set-up work done by the first executive director, Elliot Hibbs, was important foundational work and that the organization is well-poised to excel in policy and relationship mapping work under Allvin's direction.

Appendix B: Interview Protocol

Environmental Scan for Arizona Early Childhood Systems Building Interview Protocol

1. Can you start by telling me a bit about your role in the early childhood work in AZ? What are your key areas of focus?
2. When you think of what children and families need to thrive, what is your vision for what Arizona's early childhood development system should look like 10 years from now?
3. What have been the key early childhood achievements in the last few years? [Interviewer probe: Do they seem consistent with the vision outlined above? If not, why?]
4. What are the important policy priorities that have not been addressed yet, or need more attention? [Interviewer probe: Why? What have been the barriers?]
5. In considering Arizona today, what do you see as the greatest opportunities and challenges in creating a comprehensive early childhood system? [Interviewer probe: In what areas? Financing, governance, public engagement?]
6. Thinking of leadership, what do you think Arizona needs most to be successful in creating a strong early childhood system? Are there one or more individuals or organizations that can provide this ideal leadership? [Interviewer probe: Does the individual/organization named by respondent have the capacity and capabilities needed to successfully lead the systems-building effort? the influence to secure needed resources? the ability to work inclusively with other key partners around common goals? a vision for a system that includes early learning, family support, child health, and special needs/early intervention services for all of Arizona's children? Is FTF an organization that can serve as a key leader in EC systems-building in AZ? Why or why not?]
7. When you think of the current constellation of partners working to advance effective early childhood policies and increased investments, do you think it is complete? [Interviewer probe: Who is missing? Who needs to play a stronger role? Who is problematic or needs a counter-perspective? Do parents have a voice? Are geographic, ethnic and racial constituencies represented effectively?]
8. In closing, is there anything else you think is important to mention that we have not had the chance to speak specifically about?

Appendix C: Initial Outreach Email to Key Informants

Dear ,

My name is _____ and I am working on behalf of the BUILD Initiative, a project of the Early Childhood Funders' Collaborative. BUILD has been asked to conduct some research focused on the progress that Arizona has made in efforts to improve child well-being and to assess opportunities and barriers to pursue further early childhood system development work. This research is being conducted to inform potential funding investments across the state for work in early childhood.

The timeframe for producing this report is very short, but BUILD plans to interview 20 key early childhood policy makers and advocates. You have been identified by early childhood partners as a crucial thought leader in Arizona; your deep knowledge of Arizona and its early childhood work make you an important key informant for the project. Your contributions to this research project will be greatly valued. Your comments will only be shared in the aggregate publicly.

The interview will take approximately 45 minutes. **Please review the potential appointment times below and let us know your availability as soon as possible.** <TIME FRAMES >

We will specifically be asking about your early childhood work and any perspectives you have about the opportunities and barriers to creating significant progress toward meeting the needs of young children and their families. We are also interested in hearing any thoughts you have about the areas where Arizona has made progress and the areas where future policy work is needed.

You will also be receiving an online survey, which can be completed at your convenience. The interviews supplement the survey and allow us to dig a little deeper with key leaders.

Thank you for any time you can offer. If you have any questions, please feel free to contact me at xxx-xxx-xxxx.

Sincerely,

**Arizona Early Childhood Task Force
FTF Roles/Priorities Survey Results
August 6, 2010**

FTF Role	Number of Points Assigned (Possible = 10 per rater)
3. Quality, Access, and Affordability of Regulated Early Care and Education Settings	449
20. Early Childhood System Funding	402
1. Early Care and Education System Development and Implementation	374
9. Early Screening and Intervention	236
11. Supports and Services for Families	228
2. Quality Early Care and Education Standards, Curriculum, and Assessment	211
19. Building Public Awareness and Support	177
6. Access to Quality Health Care Coverage and Services	170
10. Information and Education for Families	168
12. Professional Development System	132
13. Recruitment and Retention of Professionals in the Early Childhood System	112
7. Nutrition and Physical Activity	105
16. Early Childhood System Leadership	87
8. Medical and Dental Homes	67
5. Supply of Health Care Services	54
4. Quality of Family, Friend, and Neighbor Early Care and Education Settings	49
18. Early Childhood System Evaluation	45
17. Coordinated Use of Early Childhood System Data	31
15. Specialized Training for Family Support Providers	26
14. Specialized Training for Health Services Providers	7



Arizona Early Childhood Task Force

Arizona Early Childhood Task Force Recommended Priority Roles for First Things First

On August 11, 2010, the Arizona Early Childhood Task Force reviewed the results of the online priorities survey. The Task Force acknowledged the following:

- 1) FTF is an essential agency in Arizona's early childhood system but there are many other critical partners who also have important roles.
- 2) FTF cannot feasibly devote sufficient time and resources at this time to carry out all the roles that are listed in the model system document if the expectation is to make a measurable difference.
- 3) There are some roles that FTF must take on, due to statutory requirements and resources that have already been committed.
- 4) There are some areas in which FTF has already created momentum.
- 5) Some of the roles included in the model system document are of necessity linked—if you take on one, there may be another that must be done to achieve the desired results (e.g., quality and professional development).
- 6) Establishing priorities is challenging, as all of the 20 roles form a complete early childhood system when taken as a whole. The Task Force was assured that the intent of the prioritization work was to focus resources across the state. Regional Councils will still have the opportunity to address their unique needs and build on their existing assets. Furthermore, as progress is made and opportunities present, additional roles may be addressed.

Following is the list of five priorities for action within the next one to three years. These are the roles for which the Task Force recommended FTF establish measurable benchmarks and devote resources in order to achieve results for Arizona's young children and their families. These priorities are services which could be funded at both state and regional levels:

Quality, Access, and Affordability of Regulated Early Care and Education Settings - Convene partners, provide leadership, and provide funding for increased availability of and access to high quality, regulated, culturally responsive, and affordable early care and education programs.

Supports and Services for Families - Convene partners, provide leadership, provide funding, and advocate for development, enhancement, and sustainability of a variety of high quality, culturally responsive, and affordable services, supports, and community resources for young children and their families.

Building Public Awareness and Support - Convene partners, provide leadership, and provide funding for efforts to increase public awareness of and support for early childhood development, health, and early education among partners, public officials, policy makers, and the public.

Professional Development System - Convene partners, provide leadership, and provide funding for the development and enhancement of an early childhood professional development system that addresses availability, accessibility, affordability, quality, and articulation.

Access to Quality Health Care Coverage and Services - Collaborate with partners to increase access to high quality health care services (including oral health and mental health) and affordable health care coverage for young children and their families.

In addition, the Task Force recommended that FTF take a leadership role in three priorities that focus on program and process development at the state level. These are:

Early Childhood System Funding – Secure, coordinate, and advocate for resources required to develop and sustain the early childhood system. [This does not mean that FTF would be the sole funder of the early childhood system, but would take an active role in helping to increase and coordinate available resources.]

Early Care and Education System Development and Implementation - Convene partners and provide leadership in the development and implementation of a comprehensive early care and education system that is aligned both across the spectrum of settings and with the full continuum of the educational system.

Quality Early Care and Education Standards, Curriculum, and Assessment - Convene partners, provide leadership, and provide funding for the development and implementation of quality standards for early childhood care and education programs and related curricula and assessments. [This is integral to improving the quality of early care and education settings.]



TRIBAL CONSULTATION SUMMARY NOTES

(A full report on this Tribal Consultation session is currently in process. We look forward to sharing this report in the near future.)

- On Tuesday, August 17, 2010, First Things First held a Tribal Consultation session on the 20 proposed roles of First Things First in the Arizona Early Childhood System as identified by the Arizona Early Childhood Task Force.
- This consultation was held in recognition of the unique government-to-government relationship that exists between Indian Tribes, the Federal Government and State Governments.
- During the consultation, we heard several remarks emphasizing that all of the roles identified were related, making it difficult to prioritize one over the other, something the Task Force did acknowledge as well.
- Although all of the Tribal Leaders spoke to the roles with respect to their specific communities, the discussion presented some common themes.

The following roles were noted as priorities by **ALL** participating Tribes:

- Early Screening and Intervention
- Supports and Services for Families
- Early Childhood System Funding
- Information and Education for Families

The following are the 8 roles that were emphasized through dialogue and written comments by Arizona Tribes:

- Early Screening and Intervention
- Early Care and Education System Development and Implementation
- Supports and Services for Families
- Early Childhood System Funding
- Coordinated Use of Early Childhood System Data
- Information and Education for Families
- Quality of Family, Friend and Neighbor Early Care and Education
- Quality Early Care and Education Standards, Curriculum, and Assessment

Note: Five (5) Tribes participated in the consultation session and one (1) Tribe submitted written remarks. Participants included: Hopi Tribe, Hualapai Tribe, Pascua Yaqui Tribe, Tohono O'odham Nation, Fort McDowell Yavapai Nation and the Salt River Pima-Maricopa Indian Community



FIRST THINGS FIRST

Regional Area Forums Summary Notes August 2010

Regional Forums were held in six regional locations across the state in August 2010. Each forum provided the opportunity for members from multiple Regional Councils to get together with a Board member and a member of the First Things First leadership team to highlight successful strategies in the regions, as well as engage in interactive discussion on First Things First fiscal policy and strategic direction. The conversation on strategic direction focused on the Early Childhood Task Force recommendations on First Things First priorities. Participants were asked to comment on the following questions:

- What outcomes do you want to see as a result of setting collective priorities?
- How do we hold ourselves accountable for achieving improved outcomes?
- What tools and resources do you need to be successful moving from priority setting to developing funding plans?

Many Council members expressed they understand and support that First Things First needs to demonstrate collective and scaled outcomes across the state, and that we cannot move forward if all regions are seeing only small incremental increases in strategy outcomes. They noted that the scope and reach of services is important.

Regional Council members strongly conveyed that Councils also need to be able to determine priorities at the regional level to specifically address local community needs. There is concern that a Council's independence and ability to make local decisions will be impacted, and that decisions will be directed only by the Board.

Participants stated that outcomes with benchmarks are important to hold ourselves accountable. There was a caution about establishing only one benchmark that every region would be held accountable. It was suggested that a menu of outcomes from which regions could choose, with flexibility in establishing benchmarks, would help address the diversity among regions in regards to funding and other resources.

Regarding tools and resources for funding plan development, participants request that consistent program and accountability standards be built into the grant process. They also cited the Needs and Assets report as an important tool. Across all forums, Regional Council members said they need more data on the performance of grantees, and the outcomes of funded strategies that can inform subsequent funding plan decisions.



**First Things First
2010 Early Childhood Summit
Joint Planning Session
Participant Feedback
August 30-31, 2010**

Monday, August 30

Feedback and Recommendations on FTF Priorities

Process

Participants worked from the model system charts, the list of 20 potential FTF roles in the model system, and the list of 8 priorities recommended by the Arizona Early Childhood Task Force. Participants engaged in tabletop discussions, facilitated by a FTF Regional Coordinator. Results were captured on flip charts.

Questions and Summary of Responses

1. What is your initial reaction to the survey results and the Task Force recommendations?

Summary of Responses

Many groups commented favorably on the focus on quality, accessibility, and affordability. Several specifically mentioned the importance of addressing health in the top priorities, including oral health and mental health. Some were surprised about the order of the top priorities, but appeared to have thought they were listed in priority order (which they were not). Some were surprised that unregulated care and early screening and intervention were not among the top priorities. Some questioned where early literacy would fit. Others suggested some lumping of priorities that were not specifically included, e.g., nutrition and physical activity, information and education for families. It was noted by some that the list of priorities matches current regional funding plans well, while others were concerned about loss of local control. Some were concerned that there were too many priorities. There were comments throughout the notes regarding the relative merits of “lumping” several discrete priorities into one larger one. Concerns were raised about smaller regions with smaller funding levels and how they could put together a system with available resources.

2. What questions do you have about the priorities?

Summary of Responses

Many of the questions posed were subsequently answered at the beginning of the Tuesday afternoon session. There were several questions about who responded to the on-line survey.

3. What do you like about the list of priorities (if not already covered in the first question)?

Summary of Responses

Comments were made about the comprehensiveness of the priorities, the fact that they addressed statutory requirements, that they would have measurable outcomes, that most regional priorities fit well with them, that they get FTF “back to its mission,” that they begin to narrow the focus and make it easier to advocate, that there was opportunity for input, that they focus on what FTF does

well and emphasize its leadership role, and that they offer opportunities for collaboration.

4. Are there roles that you would add to the list of priorities (given the definition of a priority and the reality of limited resources)? If so, which role and why? If you are proposing to add a role, is there any one you would delete to ensure that there are sufficient overall resources?

Summary of Responses

Four tables mentioned the importance of addressing unregulated care; some of these groups suggested including it with the priorities related to regulated care. Four tables raised the issue of data and/or evaluation, noting the importance of assessing results. As noted in response to the first question above, some groups indicated that they would like to see nutrition and physical activity, early screening and intervention, prenatal, and early/family literacy included in other priorities. The only one mentioned for exclusion was standards, curriculum, and assessment, with a notation that someone else could do this or it could be embedded in another priority.

Feedback and Recommendations on How FTF Should Hold Itself Accountable for Achieving Results for Children

Process

Participants worked from a discussion paper that outlined three considerations: 1) if and how priorities would be established, 2) how benchmarks would be established, and 3) if and how financing would be tied to priorities and/or performance. Participants engaged in tabletop discussions, facilitated by a FTF Regional Coordinator. Results were captured on flip charts.

Questions and Summary of Responses

1. What are the implications of the various points along the three continua in terms of achieving significant outcomes for young children statewide?
2. What are the implications of the various points along the three continua in terms of how we function? (Consider coordination, funding plans, strategies, RFGAs, monitoring, etc.)
3. Other considerations?

Summary of Responses

Some tables noted that they were confused about the issues for discussion and felt that there were too many unknowns. Because there were three considerations (how priorities should be set, benchmarking, and financing) and two questions about each (implications for achieving results and impact of functioning), there was a lot to discuss in the time allotted. Flip chart notes reflected this challenge. It was noted that much more conversation is needed on these questions and that an inclusive, transparent process should be used. Information on how other states have addressed these questions was requested.

Issues identified included the following:

- The balance between a need for flexibility to address local needs and assets and statewide accountability
- The need for outcome data to demonstrate the effectiveness to policymakers and the public
- The need to ensure that members of Regional Councils have an important role to play and that they will be able to act in the best interests of the children in their area
- The need to ensure compliance with the statute as it relates to the roles of the Board and the Regional Councils

- Lack of Regional Council control over grantee performance with respect to achievement of benchmarks
- How funding related to benchmarks would be handled, e.g., what if a region is already at the top, what about exceeding benchmarks, would money be taken away, where would the money come from, is there a way to incentivize other than money
- How and by whom benchmarks would be set
- Concern about disincentivizing innovation and creativity
- Access to timely and accurate data related to indicators and benchmarks
- Cross-region coordination and collaboration
- State/regional trust
- Impact on small, rural, and Tribal areas

Tuesday, August 31

Voting on FTF Priorities and How FTF Should Hold Itself Accountable for Achieving Results for Children

Process

Participants arranged themselves in groups of three for purposes of using the voting technology (handheld keypads). Following the votes, participants were invited to explain their vote or why they did not vote.

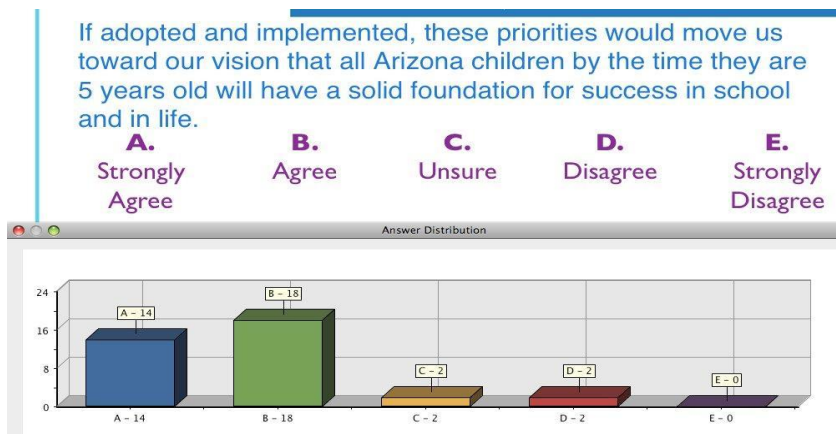
Questions and Summary of Responses (the response receiving the largest percentage of votes is shown in bold)

Participants were asked to answer three practice questions to familiarize themselves with the electronic voting instruments.

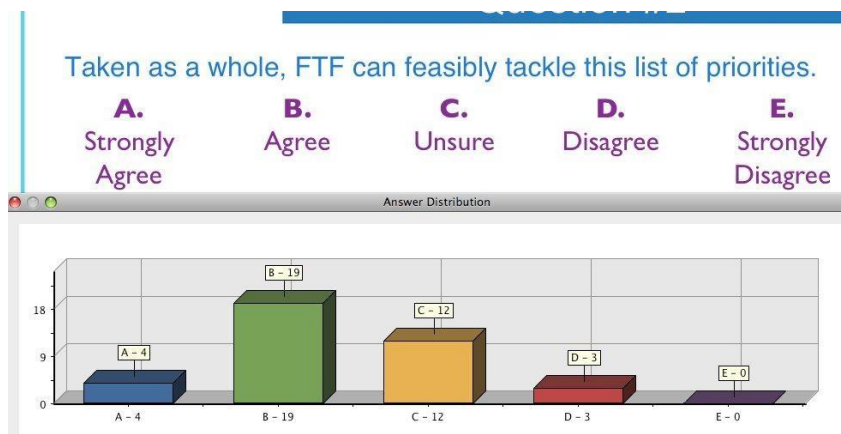
1. The first Board Chair of First Things First was:
 - a. Elliot Hibbs, 0%
 - b. **Nadine Mathis Basha, 90%** (Correct answer)
 - c. Steve Lynn, 0%
 - d. Rhian Evans Allvin, 0%
 - e. No Response, 10%
2. What was the original number of First Things First Regional Councils established in 2008?
 - a. 30 Regional Councils, 2%
 - b. 21 Regional Councils, 21% (Correct answer) (Postscript: There were also 10 Tribal Councils)
 - c. **31 Regional Councils, 67%**
 - d. No Response, 10%
3. The years from birth to age 5 are the most important in the development of a child's brain.
 - a. **Strongly Agree, 74%**
 - b. Agree, 7%
 - c. Disagree, 2%
 - d. Strongly Disagree, 5%
 - e. No Response, 12%

Recommended Priorities (based on the Arizona Early Childhood Task Force list of recommendations: Quality, Access, and Affordability of Regulated Early Care and Education Settings; Supports and Services for Families; Building Public Awareness and Support; Professional Development System; Access to Quality Health Care Coverage and Services; Early Childhood System Funding; Early Care and Education System Development and Implementation; and Quality Early Care and Education Standards, Curriculum, and Assessment)

1. If adopted and implemented, these priorities would move us toward our vision that all Arizona children by the time they are 5 years old will have a solid foundation for success in school and in life.
 - a. Strongly Agree, 33%
 - b. **Agree**, 43%
 - c. Disagree, 5%
 - d. Strongly Disagree, 5%
 - e. No Response, 14%

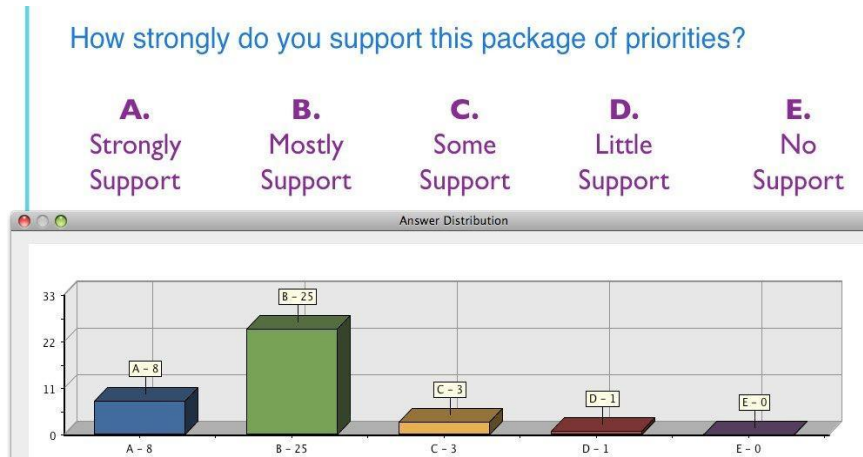


2. Taken as a whole, FTF can feasibly tackle this list of priorities.
 - a. Strongly Agree, 10%
 - b. **Agree**, 45%
 - c. Disagree, 29%
 - d. Strongly Disagree, 7%
 - e. No Response, 10%



3. How strongly do you support this package of priorities?

- a. Strongly Support, 19%
- b. **Mostly Support**, 60%
- c. Support, 7%
- d. Little Support, 2%
- e. No Support, 0%
- f. No Response, 12%



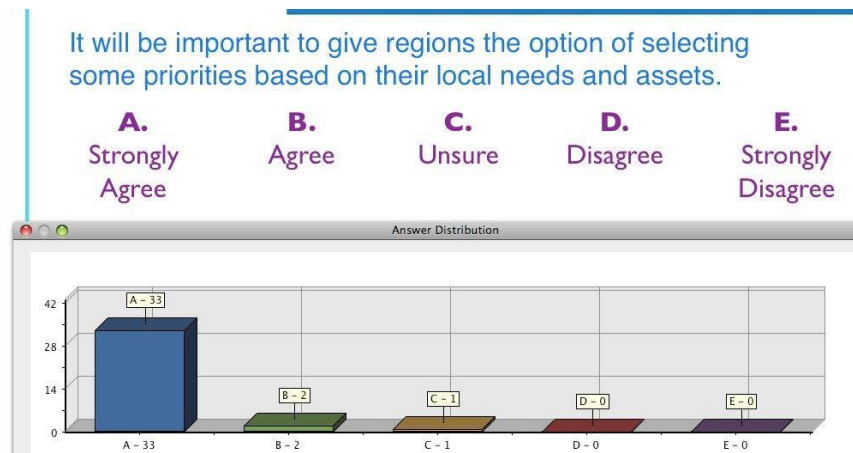
Comments on Recommended Priorities

- Concern was expressed about not including kith and kin care, early screening and intervention, and prenatal care.
- There are still too many priorities; need to narrow the list further.

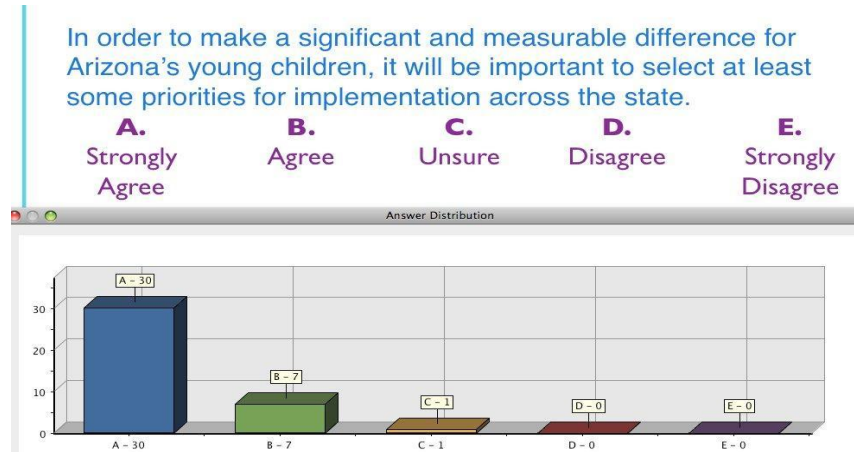
Achieving Results for Children

4. It will be important to give regions the option of selecting some priorities based on their local needs and assets.

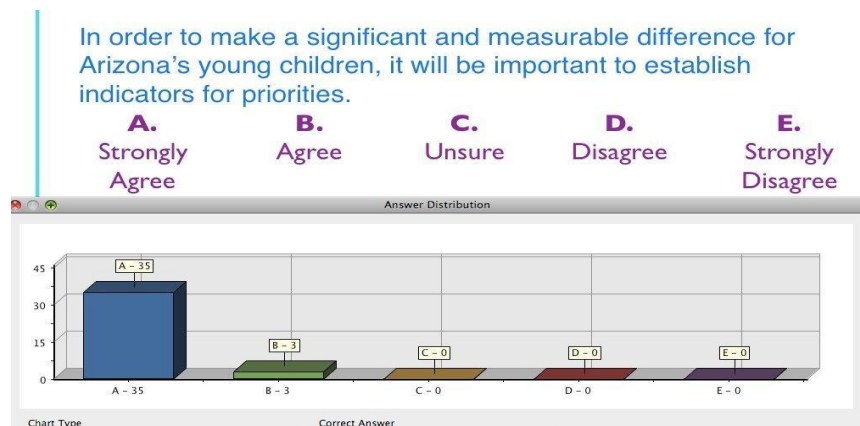
- a. **Strongly Agree**, 79%
- b. Agree, 5%
- c. Unsure, 2%
- d. Disagree, 0%
- e. Strongly Disagree, 0%
- f. No Response, 14%



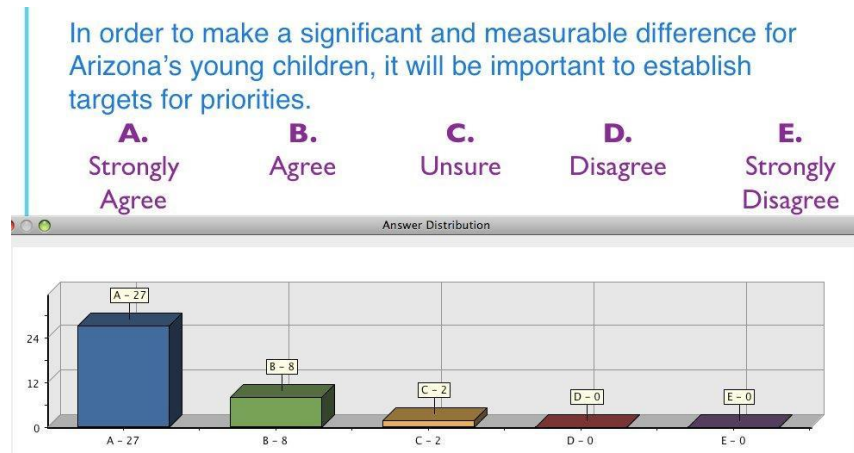
5. In order to make a significant and measurable difference for Arizona's young children, it will be important to select at least some priorities for implementation across the state.
- Strongly Agree**, 71%
 - Agree, 17%
 - Unsure, 2%
 - Disagree, 0%
 - Strongly Disagree, 0%
 - No Response, 10%



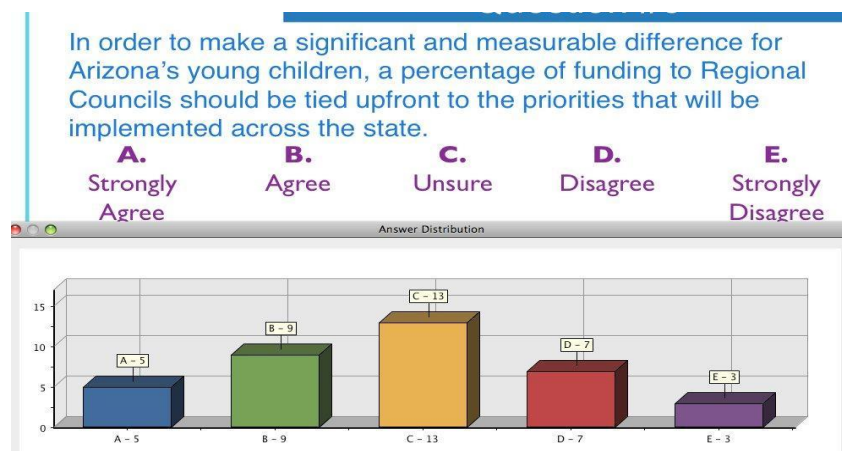
6. In order to make a significant and measurable difference for Arizona's young children, it will be important to establish indicators for priorities.
- Strongly Agree**, 83%
 - Agree, 7%
 - Unsure, 0%
 - Disagree, 0%
 - Strongly Disagree, 0%
 - No Response, 10%



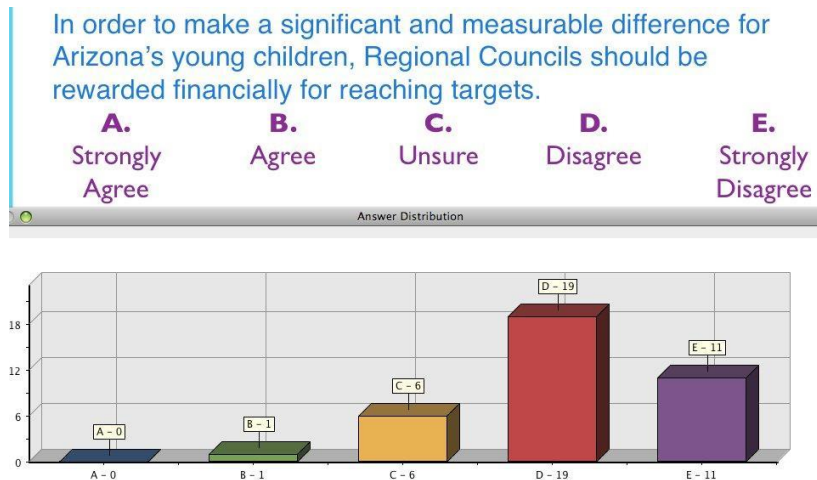
7. In order to make a significant and measurable difference for Arizona's young children, it will be important to establish targets for priorities.
- Strongly Agree**, 64%
 - Agree, 19%
 - Unsure, 5%
 - Disagree, 0%
 - Strongly Disagree, 0%
 - No Response, 12%



8. In order to make a significant and measurable difference for Arizona's young children, a percentage of funding to Regional Councils should be tied upfront to the priorities that will be implemented across the state.
- Strongly Agree, 12%
 - Agree, 21%
 - Unsure**, 31%
 - Disagree, 17%
 - Strongly Disagree, 7%
 - No Response, 12%



9. In order to make a significant and measurable difference for Arizona's young children, Regional Councils should be rewarded financially for reaching targets.
- Strongly Agree, 0%
 - Agree, 2%
 - Unsure, 14%
 - Disagree**, 45%
 - Strongly Disagree, 26%
 - No Response, 12%



Comments on Achieving Results for Children

- There should be priorities that are established across the state and opportunity to select some that are region-specific.
- It was noted that most regional priorities fit into those priorities recommended by the Arizona Early Childhood Task Force.
- There were questions about the balance between State and regional priorities and the impact of setting State priorities on regional funding plans.
- Concern was expressed about the impact of setting statewide priorities and setting targets on smaller regions.
- Concern was expressed about the autonomy of Regional Councils.
- The importance of collaboration and partnership throughout the state was highlighted.
- With respect to indicators and targets, questions were asked about how targets would be set and by whom and whether these would be absolute or a percentage increase from the regional baseline.
- Concern was expressed about being held accountable for performance when it is not in the direct control of the Regional Council.
- A request was made to see what other states have done to achieve results for children. Early Childhood Consultant Karen Ponder commented on the importance and value of establishing some common indicators and targets and showing measurable progress over time.

Additional Questions (posed contemporaneously based on questions raised in the comment section following the votes on Achieving Results for Children)

10. If a percent of funding were to be directed toward priorities across the state, what percent do you recommend?

- a. **0-25%**, 55%
- b. 26-50%, 19%
- c. 51-75%, 5%
- d. 76-100%, 7%
- e. No Response, 14%

