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Early Childhood Systems Building Resource Guide: Understanding Systems Building



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State Capacity Building Center

Early Childhood Systems Building Resource Guide: Understanding Systems Building

This chapter of the Early Childhood Systems Building Resource Guide (SBRG) is a starting point for state and territory leaders who are interested in early childhood systems building. Beginning with definition and methods of building early childhood systems, the chapter also covers system integration and common themes in systems building. The chapter includes examples of both systems building initiatives and early childhood systems in states and localities as well as resources and tools that can be used to assess the strengths and opportunities in an early childhood system.

Why Build a System?

The science of early childhood development and early learning makes clear the importance and complexity of caring for and educating young children from infancy through the early elementary years, or birth through age 8. Across numerous disciplines of study, research demonstrates that children benefit most from high-quality experiences that consistently build on each other over time, especially when their families are valued and engaged in the experiences.¹ Yet the systems with which children and families interact are significantly fragmented.²

To apply what is being learned from science about caring for and educating young children, and to address the challenges of fragmentation, many states and communities seek to build and scale equitable early childhood systems to help achieve positive results for young children so they can reach their full potential. To this end, states are using systems building as a way of thinking and acting that helps optimize this complex environment and scale long-term systemic change and impact.

What Is Early Childhood Systems Building?

Building and integrating early childhood systems stems from a goal to improve opportunities for children and families and best use resources, attention, and funding. “The goal of such efforts is to institutionalize programs and policies into durable systems. Although the precise efforts vary, those engaged in them share the recognition of the burdens of an incoherent nonsystem ...

As the largest single funder of early and school-age care and education services, the Child Care and Development Fund (CCDF) is itself a systems approach that incorporates early care and education service financing, quality improvement, and supply building efforts with attention to important issues linkages to other services at the state and local levels. CCDF grantees, supported by the federal Office of Child Care (OCC), are well positioned to coordinate with other agencies and/or programs to

- engage with families in their states and territories to identify priorities and gaps that could be addressed with CCDF-funded programs;
- equitably increase accessibility and affordability of high-quality early and school-age care and education services;
- support quality investments to promote continuous quality improvement of both programs and workforce;
- support families and children, especially those with multiple barriers to success, by helping address physical health, mental health, early care and education, and access to comprehensive services; and
- coordinate data collection, reporting, and evaluation to improve early and school-age care and education services.

¹ Allen, L., & Kelly, B. B. (Eds.). (2015). *Transforming the workforce for children birth through age 8: A Unifying foundation*. The National Academies Press.

² Kagan, S. L., & Cohen, N. E. (1997). *Not by chance: Creating an early care and education system for America's children*. Bush Center in Child Development and Social Policy at Yale University.

[it requires] thinking that transcends the provision of any individual program and considers early childhood services broadly and comprehensively.”³ This work also requires participatory and equitable engagement with the families who use the services, the workforce that organizes and delivers the services, and others—such as business leaders—who depend on the services, so that the state system is equitable and reflects the community members it is designed to serve.

Defining a System

“A system is a group of interacting, interrelated, and interdependent components that form a complex and unified whole.”⁴ A system’s overall purpose or goal is achieved through the actions and interactions of its components. Its characteristics can include:

- **Numerous subsystems:** Each component in a system is usually a “system within a system,” with its own set of interacting programs, policies, and strategies that meet certain beneficiary needs.
- **Part of a larger system:** The system is an open system, meaning it interacts with other systems, has permeable boundaries, and is affected by its external environment.
- **Essential interconnections:** A system has a goal or function that is best achieved when its components function well together. More colloquially, with systems, the whole is greater than the sum of the parts.
- **A “loosely coupled” system:** Health, education, or human service systems generally are loosely coupled but can be aligned and connected to build coherence of purpose.

Defining Systems Building

Systems initiatives are organized efforts to improve a system and its impacts.⁵ They can be publicly or privately funded, or a combination of the two. Systems initiatives in the early childhood field may have different labels, such as systems building, systems change, or systems reform. Yet systems initiatives are best understood by their focus or by the areas of the system they are trying to improve. Specifically, an early childhood systems initiative might focus on one or more of these five areas:

- **Context:** Improve the political environment that surrounds the early childhood system so it produces the policy and funding changes needed to create and sustain it.
- **Components:** Establish high-performing early learning programs and services within the system that produce equitable results for system beneficiaries (e.g., children, families).
- **Connections:** Create strong and effective linkages across early childhood system components that further improve results for system beneficiaries.
- **Infrastructure:** Develop the ongoing supports that systems need to function effectively and equitably, and with quality.
- **Scale:** Ensure a comprehensive system is equitably available to all intended beneficiaries to produce broad and inclusive results for system beneficiaries.

³ Kagan, S. L., & Kauerz, K. (Eds.). (2012). *Early childhood systems: Transforming early learning*. Teachers College Press.

⁴ Coffman, J. (2007). *A framework for evaluating systems initiatives*. BUILD Initiative. <https://cupdf.com/document/a-framework-for-evaluating-systems-framework-for-evaluating-systems-initiatives.html>

⁵ Coffman, J. (2007). *A framework for evaluating systems initiatives*. BUILD Initiative. <https://cupdf.com/document/a-framework-for-evaluating-systems-framework-for-evaluating-systems-initiatives.html>

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Shown in figure 1 below, these five areas comprise the aspects of a system that, if developed or advanced, can produce broad impacts for the system's intended beneficiaries, including children and others. Systems initiatives do not have to focus on all five areas, although most focus on more than one area simultaneously. They do not, however, typically place an equal emphasis on all focus areas at once. Some areas receive more attention than others at any given point in time, depending on where the system's needs are greatest and the opportunities that are available.

Figure 1. Five Areas of the Early Childhood System



What It Means to Build an Early Childhood System

Early childhood systems building is the ongoing process of improving the five areas outlined above. Due to the fragmented nature of the various systems that support young children, many states and territories are also working to build coherence between these five areas so that the infrastructure (financing, governance, and professional development), programs (Head Start, child care, early intervention, prekindergarten, home visiting, and other health and human services), and sectors (public, business, philanthropy, and nonprofit) of early childhood operate more as a whole. The widely recognized and desired systemic effects are program effectiveness, equity, coherence, and sustainability with the ultimate outcome of benefiting children and families.⁶

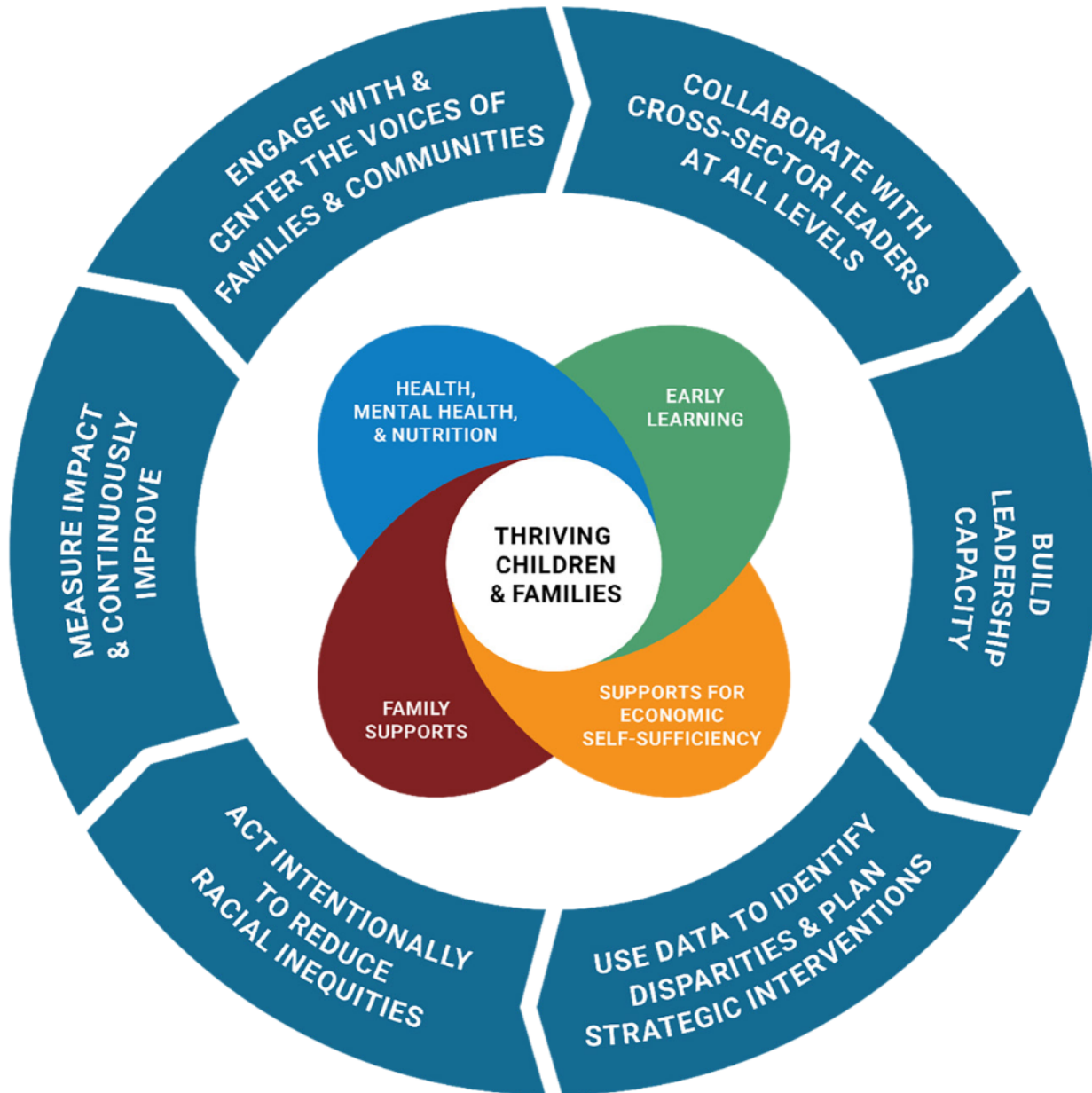
Learnings, Tools, and State Examples for Building an Early Childhood System

Early childhood systems building is messy and complex work that can be difficult to understand, explain, and improve. The Early Childhood Systems Work Group (ECSWG) developed a tool to assist states in planning for and implementing systems that can provide an integrated continuum of policies, services, and programs so that children and families thrive.⁷ Since the development of this tool, considerable new effort has gone into recognizing the importance of centering the voices of families as well as infusing the principles of diversity, equity, and inclusion as core features of systems building and a critical outcome. This enhanced focus is illustrated in the graphic in figure 2 below, used with permission from the BUILD Initiative.

⁶ Kagan, S. L., & Kauerz, K. (Eds.). (2012). *Early childhood systems: Transforming early learning*. Teachers College Press.

⁷ Early Childhood Systems Work Group. (2014). *Comprehensive early childhood systems-building: A tool to inform discussions on collaborative, cross-sector planning*. BUILD Initiative. <https://buildinitiative.org/resource-library/comprehensive-early-childhood-system-building-a-tool-to-inform-discussions-on-collaborative-cross-sector-planning/>

Figure 2. System Work in the Early Childhood Context



What is the purpose of this tool and graphic?

The purpose of this tool and graphic is to help state and community leaders improve the capacity of their early childhood systems. Comprehensive early childhood systems require work across the fields of health, mental health, and nutrition; early learning; supports for economic self-sufficiency and family supports to achieve agreed-upon outcomes for thriving children and families. This work includes deep inclusion of and partnership with families, providers, and leaders in the community who bring forward their expertise and experience across the state’s racial, geographic, cultural, and linguistic communities.

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Who are the intended users of this tool and graphic?

The tool and graphic were designed to assist facilitators working with state or community partners from multiple sectors to plan for and manage integrated early childhood systems. Partners might include leaders from the governor’s or mayor’s office; a Children’s Cabinet or a State Advisory Council on Early Childhood Education and Care; relevant state, county, and local agencies; nongovernmental agencies; family members; members of the early childhood workforce; others in the early childhood policy and professional community; and those who depend on a strong early childhood system, such as business and civic leaders.

In addition to the ECSWG tool, there is another resource that provides a source of learning for states as they work to reform their systems for the benefit of children and families. Sharon Lynn Kagan and Kristie Kauerz created a seminal volume of experiences and writings from state leaders about how to create early childhood systems that transcend politics and economics to serve the needs of all young children. The book, *Early Childhood Systems: Transforming Early Learning*, includes scholarship and practical examples of systems building efforts taking place in the field.⁸

Conceptualizing an early childhood system is important work happening in states. There is no single path, roadmap, or blueprint for creating an early childhood system. What works in one state for one systems-building purpose may not work in another, or even in the same state for different systems-building purposes. “States and communities each find their own path. It would not be possible to develop an approach that recommends one linear process. System building is dynamic and can occur in fits and starts or double back and start over.”⁹ What remains paramount is the strategic intent and specificity with which states design and implement an early childhood system.

“

“The age span—from birth through age 8—is not a developmental period with discrete boundaries; rather, it is a continuum that encompasses individual variations in development and that begins before birth and continues after age 8 into the rest of childhood and beyond. It is an important window for children because of the troubling disconnect between the disjointed systems that serve them and the rapid pace of their development as their experiences profoundly shape their long-term trajectories.”

”

— *Transforming the Workforce for Children Birth Through Age 8: A Unifying Foundation*¹⁰

“

“Systems are everywhere—they can be ecological, mechanical, organizational, political, cultural, and so on.”

”

— Peter M. Senge, *The Fifth Discipline: The Art & Practice of the Learning Organization*

⁸ Kagan, S. L., & Kauerz, K. (Eds.). (2012). *Early childhood systems: Transforming early learning*. Teachers College Press.

⁹ Early Childhood Systems Work Group. (2014). *Comprehensive early childhood systems-building: A tool to inform discussions on collaborative, cross-sector planning*. BUILD Initiative. <https://buildinitiative.org/resource-library/comprehensive-early-childhood-system-building-a-tool-to-inform-discussions-on-collaborative-cross-sector-planning/>

¹⁰ Allen, L., & Kelly, B. B. (Eds.). (2015). *Transforming the workforce for children birth through age 8: A Unifying foundation*. The National Academies Press.

Approaches to Systems Integration

While much has been written about models, approaches, and the design of human service systems, the work remains complex, the processes dynamic, and the structural alignment ever-changing. There are varied approaches to building early care and education systems; some focus on structural components while others focus on processes. For the most part, there is a lot of overlap in the definitions and approaches for systems integration. Some key aspects of different approaches are outlined below.

- **Systems integration as a way of thinking:** Effective cross-systems efforts must reframe how to think about change and help establish a deeper understanding of why situations are the way they are and how to improve outcomes. Systems thinking allows partners to see multiple and complex interconnections and to use the key leverage points within the system to make small changes that can have a substantial effect on desired outcomes.
- **Systems integration focused on structural issues (e.g., governance, funding, policies, and standards):** It is important to identify core components, define the system, and agree on what the system is designed to achieve. The development of shared structural mechanisms to support and sustain systems integration is central to the success of cross-systems efforts.
- **Systems integration focused on processes that support integration (e.g., strategic planning, relationship building, and communication):** Implementation approaches commonly suggested by systems building initiatives include planning tools such as line-of-sight and mental map exercises and implementation approaches such as [Plan-Do-Check-Act](#) (PDCA), theory of change, and implementation science.

The table that follows provides brief descriptions of several systems building initiatives. While they vary in scope and their audiences, they provide highlights of different approaches. Recall that early childhood systems building initiatives may include some or all of the elements of the framework for systems building mentioned above (context, components, connections, infrastructure, and scale).

The table starts with initiatives that are ongoing and includes some that have concluded but provide important information about systems building.

Table 1. Systems Building Initiatives

Current Initiatives		
Initiative	Scope	Target Audience
<p>Build Initiative: Strong Foundations for our Youngest Children</p> <p>http://www.buildinitiative.org</p>	<p>Partnership with state leaders to create the policies, infrastructure, and cross-sector connections necessary for quality and equity, with a focus on early learning, health, mental health, nutrition, child welfare, and family support and engagement. Coordination of comprehensive supports for children and their families to ensure positive health, social-emotional, and cognitive outcomes for children birth to age 5 and their families.</p>	<p>States</p>

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Current Initiatives		
Initiative	Scope	Target Audience
<p>Center for the Study of Social Policy</p> <p>Various early childhood focused initiatives:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> ▪ Early Childhood Learning and Innovation Network for Communities (EC-LINC) (https://cssp.org/our-work/project/early-childhood-learning-and-innovation-network-for-communities/) ▪ Strengthening Families (https://cssp.org/our-work/project/strengthening-families/) ▪ Early Learning Nation Communities (https://cssp.org/our-work/project/early-learning-nation/#guide) 	<p>Partnerships, primarily local, to foster early childhood systems building.</p> <p>EC-LINC: Helping communities build results-oriented, integrated early childhood systems that improve outcomes for young children and their families.</p> <p>Strengthening Families: Engaging families, programs, and communities to adopt the Strengthening Families framework, which is a research-informed approach to increase family strengths, enhance child development, and reduce the likelihood of child abuse and neglect.</p> <p>Early Learning Nation: Supporting a network of communities that work to achieve equitable results for children and their families, building their strategies according to local needs, resources, and priorities.</p>	<p>State and local communities and organizations</p>
<p>Child Trends: Early Childhood Health Equity (ECHE) Landscape Project</p> <p>https://www.childtrends.org/publications/early-childhood-health-equity-landscape-project</p>	<p>The ECHE Landscape Project explored and documented innovative practices across the United States that sit at the intersection of early childhood development and health equity. The project presented information about 143 cross-sector early childhood systems initiatives commonly addressing the social-emotional development, mental health, and school readiness aspects of health and development.</p>	<p>Policymakers, advocates, communities, and families</p>
<p>Early Childhood Data Collaborative (ECDC)</p> <p>http://www.ecedata.org/</p>	<p>Supports state policymakers' development and use of coordinated state early care and education (ECE) data systems. The ECDC provides tools and resources to encourage data-driven state policy changes and provide a national forum to support the development and use of coordinated state ECE data systems.</p>	<p>State agencies</p>

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Current Initiatives		
Initiative	Scope	Target Audience
<p>Health Resources & Services Administration (HRSA) Maternal Child Health Bureau</p> <p>Early Childhood Systems Initiative Portfolio:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> ▪ Early Childhood Comprehensive Systems (ECCS) ▪ Infant-Toddler Court Program ▪ Early Childhood Developmental Health System (ECDHS) ▪ Rural Health Integration Models for Parents and Children to Thrive (IMPACT) Program <p>https://mchb.hrsa.gov/programs-impact/programs/early-childhood-systems</p>	<p>Federal, grant-awarding agency that supports the healthy development of all children by addressing systemic barriers to coordination, reach, and equity; addressing the needs of children and their caregivers together (known as a two-generation approach); and promoting holistic health and well-being through partnerships that bridge medical, mental, and behavioral health, early care and education, child welfare, and other human services and family supports.</p>	<p>States and territories</p>
<p>Preschool Development Grant Birth through Five</p> <p>https://www.acf.hhs.gov/ecd/early-learning/preschool-development-grants</p>	<p>Provides funds to states to conduct a comprehensive statewide birth through age 5 needs assessment followed by in-depth strategic planning while enhancing parent choice and expanding the current mixed-delivery system consisting of a wide range of provider types and settings, including child care centers and home-based child care providers, Head Start and Early Head Start, state prekindergarten, and home visiting service providers across the public, private, and faith-based sectors.</p>	<p>States and territories</p>

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Historic Initiatives		
Initiative	Scope	Target Audience
Family Impact Institute https://www.purdue.edu/hhs/hdfs/fii/	Provided policymakers and professionals with nonpartisan, solution-oriented research and a family and racial equity lens on many of the complex issues being debated in state legislatures across the country.	The initiative targeted 27 states and the District of Columbia and then was narrowed to a smaller network of states.
Work Support Strategies: Streamlining Access, Strengthening Families https://www.urban.org/work-support-strategies	Coordination of key human services to simplify application and eligibility processes and increase efficiencies in helping families achieve and sustain economic independence and stability.	Through a competitive grant application process, nine states participated: Colorado, Idaho, Illinois, Kentucky, New Mexico, North Carolina, Oregon, Rhode Island, and South Carolina.

Common Themes and Opportunities

Although the initiatives described above include a variety of systems models and theories, they share some common themes: leadership, strategic planning, supports, and the use of data and communications.

Common Themes Across Initiatives

- **Leadership roles:** Initiatives include one or more leadership roles that are designed to unite partners and the public around a common vision.
- **Strategic plan:** Initiatives establish a cohesive plan that articulates a common vision from which to build, enhance, and sustain systems to improve services and policies for children, youth, families, and communities.
- **Supports:** Initiatives involve staff and clients in planning and training and provide ongoing support for process and policy changes that result from systems building efforts.
- **Data:** Initiatives use data to inform decisionmaking and improve services.
- **Communication:** Initiatives use many methods to provide open communication among partners, leadership, and staff and among the initiatives' project/services and clients.

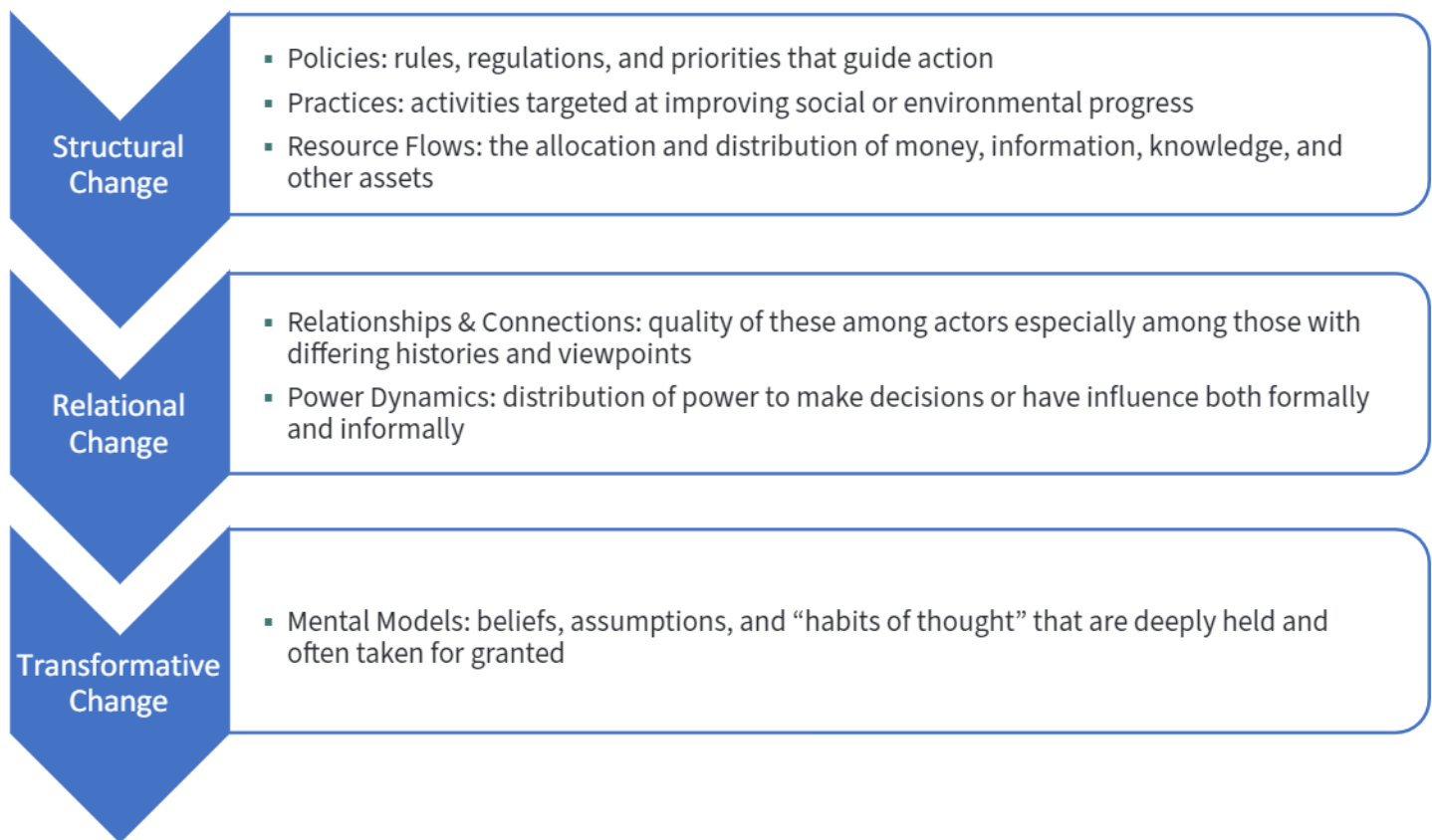
Opportunities for Improving Cross-Sector Systems

- Systems building includes both structure and process.
- Building a system is an ongoing process that takes place in phases. Systems development and systems implementation may require different functions. Resist the temptation to build a system focused on a single point in time.
- The greater the number of services, sectors, or programs to be integrated, the more complex the work is and the harder it is to accomplish. Many initiatives maintain a narrow focus, such as early learning, to move forward successfully and quickly.
- Children and families are impacted by all facets of family life, community resources, and even the current state and national context. Pay attention to the intersections and interconnections across subsystems that touch children and families.

“A central axiom of the organizational development field is that the different parts of any system are interdependent: changes in one part of the system will be reacted to, and often resisted by, other parts of the system...desired changes in frontline practice require accompanying changes in the other dimensions of the service system if they are to be successful and be sustained.”¹¹

Finally, systems are ever-changing and must be continually evaluated to determine whether they meet the needs they were built to meet or if they need to change to accommodate emerging issues. In *The Water of Systems Change*, John Kania and others argue that “systems change is about shifting the conditions that are holding the problem in place.”¹² In the article, the authors delve into six possible conditions—policies, practices, resource flows, relationships and connections, power dynamics, and mental models—that could be targets for strategies toward systems change, whether structural, relational, or transformative.

Figure 3. The Water of Systems Change Targets for System Change



¹¹ Cohen, E., & Ooms, T. (1993). *From “good enough” to “best possible”: An assessment tool for the Child and Family Services Plan*. The Family Impact Seminar. https://www.purdue.edu/hhs/hdfs/fii/wp-content/uploads/2015/06/pf_fis05suppreport1.pdf

¹² Kania, J., Kramer, M., & Senge, P. (2018). *The water of systems change*. FSG. https://www.fsg.org/resource/water_of_systems_change/#resource-downloads

Resources

General Resources on Systems Building

This section provides a set of general resources on systems building. Many systems building initiatives begin with or involve strategic planning. Please see the [Strategic Plans](#) chapter of the Early Childhood Systems Building Resource Guide for more information on this topic.

Backbone starter guide: *A summary of major resources about the backbone from FSG and the Collective Impact Forum. The Backbone Starter Guide summarizes the collective impact approach and highlights the major ideas and learnings.* Collective Impact Forum and FSG. (n.d.). <https://cachi.org/uploads/resources/Backbone-Starter-Guide-FSG.pdf>

Equity in early childhood systems: *A community action brief.* Describes ten opportunities for action to advance equity at the community level. Center for the Study of Social Policy and National Collaborative for Infants and Toddlers. (2019). <https://cssp.org/wp-content/uploads/2019/03/Community-Action-Brief-Equity-FINAL.pdf>

The fifth discipline: *The art & practice of the learning organization (2nd ed.).* Influential piece on learning organizations that remains relevant. Senge, P.M. (2006).

The nuts and bolts of building early childhood systems through state/local initiatives. This paper highlights the benefits of developing a statewide, community-level infrastructure as a core component of a statewide early childhood system, providing lessons learned from systems-building work in this area. Ponder, K., & Ames, G. (2021). BUILD Initiative. <https://buildinitiative.org/resource-library/the-nuts-and-bolts-of-building-early-childhood-systems-through-state-local-initiatives/>

Understanding the value of backbone organizations in collective impact. Backbone organizations can play a critical role in systems-building work. An in-depth review of what it takes to be a backbone organization and how to evaluate and support its work. Turner, S., Merchant, K., Kania, J., & Martin, E. (2021). FSG. <https://www.fsg.org/wp-content/uploads/2021/08/Understanding-the-Value-of-Backbone-Organizations.pdf>

Tools for Assessing Impact and Evaluation of Early Childhood Systems and Systems Building

This section provides a set of resources to assist states in assessing and evaluating their systems-building efforts.

Back to basics: *Essential components of an American early care and education system.* A historically important discussion providing context that remains relevant. Kagan, S. L. (2001). Teacher's College, Columbia University. <https://buildinitiative.org/resource-library/back-to-basics-essential-components-of-an-american-early-care-and-education-system/>

Early childhood system performance assessment toolkit:

This toolkit provides:

1. A framework that identifies the key contributions of a well-functioning early childhood system
2. A set of performance measures to assess those key contributions, either directly or by proxy
3. New tools, when needed and possible, that enable system stakeholders to measure system performance in areas that have historically not had tools for measurement
4. Guidance for early childhood system stakeholders on how they can implement the performance measures
5. An ongoing research agenda to continue to improve existing system performance measures or tools or to develop tools, where lacking.

The toolkit also offers a sample action planning template to help communities turn their results into actions that will support quality improvement. Center for the Study of Social Policy. (2019). <https://cssp.org/wp-content/uploads/2021/07/Early-Childhood-Systems-Performance-Assessment-Toolkit-2021.pdf>

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Early learning community action guide. This guide provides guidance for city, county, and other local leaders looking for ways to put their commitment to early childhood into action and achieve better outcomes for young children and their families with a focus on:

1. Community leadership, commitment, and public will to make early childhood a priority
2. Quality services that work for all young children and their families
3. Neighborhoods where families can thrive
4. Policies that support and are responsive to families

Center for the Study of Social Policy and National League of Cities. (2019). <https://cssp.org/wp-content/uploads/2019/01/ELC-Action-Guide.pdf>

A framework for evaluating systems initiatives. Sets forward a still-viable and well-accepted framework for understanding components in systems building. Coffman, J. (2007). BUILD Initiative. <https://cupdf.com/document/a-framework-for-evaluating-systems-framework-for-evaluating-systems-initiatives.html>

Infants and toddlers in the policy picture: A self-assessment toolkit for states. This toolkit is intended to help state policy leaders and advocates assess the current status of services for infants, toddlers, and their families, and to set priorities for improvement. Zero to Three. (2020). <https://www.zerotothree.org/resources/359-infants-and-toddlers-in-the-policy-picture-a-self-assessment-toolkit-for-states>

Networks of Opportunity for Child Wellbeing (NOW) playbook: Transformative community capacity to advance equity. This playbook is a resource guide designed to provide tools for local leaders, community coalitions and networks, educators, practitioners, and policymakers working to promote the wellbeing of children and families, advance equity, and align systems of care and education in early childhood. Networks of Opportunity for Child Wellbeing. (2021). <https://www.networksofopportunity.org/now-playbook>

A practical guide to evaluating systems change in a human services system context. This guide is for evaluators who would like a practical “way in” to thinking about systems and systems change. Latham, N. (2014). Center for Evaluation Innovation. http://www.pointk.org/resources/files/Latham_Human_Services_Systems.pdf

Prenatal-to-three outcomes framework data guidebook. This guidebook provides data-oriented information on the areas of Healthy Beginnings, Supported Families, and Quality Care and Learning that are essential to the National Collaborative for Infants and Toddlers’ prenatal-to-three focus. Child Trends and National Collaborative for Infants and Toddlers. (2018). https://www.thencit.org/sites/default/files/2018-12/Prenatal-to-Three Data Guidebook_0.pdf

The Water of Systems Change. *The Water of Systems Change* aims to clarify what it means to shift conditions to achieve systems change, offering a strong visual—the “inverted triangle” framework—as an actionable model for funders and others interested in creating systems change, particularly those who are working to advance equity. Kania, J., Kramer, M., & Senge, P. (2018). FSG. https://www.fsg.org/resource/water_of_systems_change/#resource-downloads

National, State, and Community-Level Examples of Early Childhood Systems

Best Starts for Kids is a county-wide systems initiative that began with a tax levy but was developed into a systems initiative and collective impact approach within King County, Washington, to meet children and families with the right services at the right time. Best Starts for Kids focuses on eight investment areas that prioritize promoting positive outcomes for kids, preventing negative outcomes, intervening early when kids and families need support, and building on community strengths. <https://kingcounty.gov/depts/community-human-services/initiatives/best-starts-for-kids/background.aspx>

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The Early Childhood Colorado Framework is a shared vision that Colorado is a place where all children are valued, healthy, and thriving. It includes fundamentals for early childhood progress, strategies for action to achieve early childhood systems change, early childhood domains, and outcomes that are based on access, quality, and equity. <https://earlychildhoodframework.org/>

The Early Learning Alliance of Fort Worth, Texas, is a collaborative of more than 50 organizations and government offices that seeks to create a system where children and families thrive. Its Framework for Success is based on equity and then belief that all children, regardless of their race, ethnicity, gender, or income, should have a strong foundation for a future of success in school and in life. <https://earlylearningtx.org>

Help Me Grow is a system model that utilizes and builds on existing resources in order to develop and enhance a comprehensive approach to early childhood systems building in any given community. It strengthens the early childhood system in a community by maintaining a current directory of available services and connecting service providers to each other to create an interconnected system. <https://helpmegrownational.org/hmg-system-model/>

LAUNCH Together was designed to improve social-emotional and developmental outcomes for Colorado's young children and their families. A unique partnership between Early Milestones, eight Colorado-based foundations, five counties, and the Butler Institute for Families supported community prevention and health promotion practices and built coordinated systems. <https://earlymilestones.org/project/launch-together/>

The North Carolina Early Childhood Action Plan is the state's strategic plan that lays out a vision for an integrated early childhood system, sets benchmarks for impact by the year 2025, and establishes shared stakeholder accountability to achieve statewide goals for young children from birth through age 8. <https://www.ncdhhs.gov/about/department-initiatives/early-childhood/early-childhood-action-plan>

Strive Together is a network of local communities working and evolving together to advance equity to achieve success for every child. It uses a collective impact model that is informed by data to guide communities through actionable milestones as they work to transform systems for more equitable results. <https://www.strivetogether.org/>

The ZoNE Spokane is a community initiative, building hope and opportunity through collective action in the neighborhoods of Northeast Spokane. Together with residents, schools, and partner organizations, it identifies deep disparities in health, education, and economic outcomes; removes barriers; and builds upon the strengths in the community so all children, youth, and families have opportunities to thrive. <https://thezonespokane.org/>



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ADMINISTRATION FOR
CHILDREN & FAMILIES

State Capacity Building Center,
A Service of the Office of Child Care

Address: 9300 Lee Highway, Fairfax, VA 22031

Phone: 877-296-2401

Email: CapacityBuildingCenter@ecetta.info

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The State Capacity Building Center (SCBC) works with state and territory leaders and their partners to create innovative early childhood systems and programs that improve results for children and families. The SCBC is funded by the U.S. Department of Health and Human Services, Administration for Children and Families, Office of Child Care.