

Rhode Island Early Learning Council Meeting

Wednesday, January 14, 2015 11:30 a.m.—1:30 p.m.

Save the Bay

Agenda

Time	Agenda Item	Lead
11:30–11:40	Welcome/Meeting Overview	Elizabeth Burke Bryant Deborah Gist
11:40–12:10	Presentation: <i>RTT–ELC Sustainability Project</i>	Jeffrey Capizzano <i>President, The Policy Equity Group</i>
12:10–1:10	Discussion and Input on Sustainability Project	Early Learning Council Members
1:10–1:20	Approval of Infant/Toddler Policy Priorities	Leanne Barrett
1:20–1:25	Public Comment	Public Participants
1:25–1:30	Next Steps	Elizabeth Burke Bryant Deborah Gist



THE

POLICY EQUITY

GROUP

EMPOWERING THE SOCIALLY CONSCIOUS

RTT-ELC Sustainability Project: Sustaining the Impact of Early Childhood System Changes Beyond the Grant Period

Jeffrey Capizzano
President

Presentation to the Rhode Island Early Learning Council
Providence, Rhode Island
January 14, 2015

Presentation Overview

- ▶ Context: Sustainability and the RTT–ELC grant
- ▶ Project overview
- ▶ Discussion of inventory of projects to be included in sustainability discussion
- ▶ Discussion of the criteria to determine which projects should be sustained and at what level
- ▶ Specific steps to complete the project and timeline
- ▶ Questions and discussion

RTT-ELC Sustainability: Context

- ▶ The federal RTT-ELC program was designed to provide the **impetus** for significant early childhood **systems reform** at the state level
- ▶ Funds were designed to create a footprint that would continue to exist long after the four-year federal grant funding had expired
- ▶ Initial RTT-ELC application specifically requested information regarding how the grant funding would be sustained “*after the grant period ends to ensure that the number and percentage of Children with High Needs served by Early Learning and Development programs in the State will be maintained or expanded.*”
- ▶ The sustainably project seeks to identify RTT-ELC projects that should be sustained and new and existing sources of funding to sustain those projects

Major Steps in the Project

- ▶ Organize Sustainability Team with representatives from major agencies implementing the RTT-ELC grant
- ▶ Create inventory of projects funded with the RTT-ELC grant
- ▶ Develop criteria by which to evaluate whether projects should be sustained (outcomes, ROI, etc.)
- ▶ Apply criteria to the RTT-ELC projects to determine projects to be sustained
- ▶ Calculate cost of sustainability and identify potential new and existing sources of funding to sustain projects
- ▶ Write sustainability report with findings
- ▶ Project seeks stakeholder input at key stages of the process

Inventory of Projects

- ▶ First **column** of sustainability matrix provides a draft list of projects funded through the RTT-ELC grant
- ▶ Used Rhode Island Scope of Work/Project Plan to inventory projects
- ▶ Distill 1,061 lines of an Excel file into a manageable set of projects
- ▶ Validated list through RTT-ELC Project staff and Sustainability Team
- ▶ Organized around 7 major projects in the grant:
 - (1) Grants Management
 - (2) Program Quality Improvement
 - (3) Aligning Program Standards
 - (4) Early Learning and Development Standards
 - (5) Comprehensive Assessment
 - (6) Data Systems; and
 - (7) Early Learning Workforce

Project 1: Grants Management

PROJECT ELEMENTS AND ACTIVITIES

- a. Staffing
- b. Communications

Project 2: Program Quality Improvement

PROJECT ELEMENTS AND ACTIVITIES

- a. Staffing
- b. Quality awards based on revised TQRIS levels
- c. TA to support higher quality
- d. Quality improvement grants

Project 3: Aligning Program Standards

PROJECT ELEMENTS AND ACTIVITIES

- a. Staffing
- b. Standards alignment
- c. Participation and monitoring
- d. Evaluation

Project 4: Early Learning and Development Standards

PROJECT ELEMENTS AND ACTIVITIES

- a. Staffing
- b. Standards development
- c. RIELDS project trainings (I–III)
- d. Fun Family Activities (TOT)
- e. Curriculum alignment to standards

Project 5: Assessment

PROJECT ELEMENTS AND ACTIVITIES

- a. Staffing
- b. Formative assessment—ECE programs
- c. Formative assessment—EI/ECSE
- d. Developmental screening
 - d.1 Public awareness campaign re: importance of screening
 - d.2 Train ELL screening teams for culturally and linguistically appropriate screening
 - d.3 Creation and revision of training materials
 - d.4 Support CQI for pediatric offices to implement screening
- e. Evidence-based interventions
- f. Kindergarten entry profile

Project 6: Data Systems

PROJECT ELEMENTS AND ACTIVITIES

- a. Staffing
- b. Program domain
- c. Teacher domain
 - c.1 Annual workforce report
- d. Student domain
- e. Interface and data warehouse
- f. Report generation
- g. Training on data system

Project 7: Workforce

PROJECT ELEMENTS AND ACTIVITIES

- a. Staffing
- b. Workforce knowledge and competencies frameworks
- c. Pre-service health and safety training
- d. Professional development center/Development of PD
- e. Annual reports of offerings in light of competencies
- f. Provide T.E.A.C.H. scholarships
- g. CCRI Level 1 Career Pathway
- h. Rhode Island College Institute for Teaching and Learning

Criteria for Sustainability

- ▶ First **row** of sustainability matrix provides the criteria by which the projects will be evaluated for sustainability

- ▶ Implementation status
 - Determined the status of the activity in relation to RTT-ELC deliverables

- ▶ Alignment to State early childhood goals
 - Examined the projects' alignment to the Rhode Island Early Learning Council Strategic Plan and the RIDE Transforming Education In Rhode Island 2010–2015 Strategic Plan

- ▶ Realized or potential impact of the project on child and teacher outcomes
 - Will be presented in narrative form and will include:
 - 1) Evidence from the research literature regarding potential impact of the project
 - 2) Evidence from administrative agencies regarding its impact/success
 - 3) Anecdotal evidence from the stakeholder community

- ▶ Will result in (slightly more nuanced) findings of “**sustain, reframe, or discontinue**”

Sources of Information

- ▶ Scope of Work/Project Plans and Budgets (with amendments)
- ▶ RI Early Learning Council and RIDE strategic plans
- ▶ Rhode Island KIDS Count Report
- ▶ Early Childhood Comprehensive System grant proposal
- ▶ CCDF state plan
- ▶ Child care market rate study
- ▶ “The Cost of Quality in Rhode Island” report

What other sources of information should be consulted?

STEP	DESCRIPTION	Date
1	Kick-off meeting with Sustainability Team to provide overview and share draft matrix template	Nov 12, 2014
2	Complete draft matrix template with criteria and projects to be included in sustainability efforts	Dec 30, 2014
3	Obtain stakeholder input on project inventory and sustainability criteria	Jan 14, 2015
4	Conduct interviews with staff of administrative agencies to fill out matrix and identify existing sources of funding for sustainability	Jan 26-30, 2015
5	Research alternative sources of sustainability funding (philanthropic, social impact bonds, etc.)	Feb 16, 2015
6	Sustainability Team meeting to discuss content of sustainability plan draft	Feb 27, 2015
7	Draft sustainability plan and share with Sustainability Team	Mar 30, 2014
8	Present draft and gather Early Learning Council and other stakeholder input	April ELC meeting
9	Summarize stakeholder comments and meet with Sustainability Team	Day after April ELC meeting
10	Incorporate comments into final draft	May 15, 2015
11	Present final draft to Early Learning Council	June ELC meeting
12	Revise based on comments and finalize	June 30, 2015

Key Questions for Consideration

- ▶ What processes/events should we be mindful of as we put the sustainability plan together (i.e., state budget cycles, CCDF plan development, Pre-K grant implementation, etc.)?
- ▶ Other ways in which the impact on children and teachers should be measured? What are the best “process measures”?
- ▶ Other vehicles for stakeholder input in addition to Early Learning Council?
- ▶ Anything else we should be considering?



Discussion and Contact Information

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Save the Bay

Meeting Summary

AGENDA SUMMARY

The Rhode Island Early Learning Council agenda addressed the following topics:

- Welcome and Updates
- Presentation: RTT-ELC Sustainability Project
- Discussion and Input on Sustainability Project
- Approval of Infant/Toddler Policy Priorities
- Public Comment
- Next Steps

KEY POINTS

Key discussion points from the meeting are summarized below:

WELCOME AND UPDATES

Commissioner Deborah Gist and Elizabeth Burke Bryant welcomed the Early Learning Council to this specially scheduled meeting, convened primarily to discuss the Race to the Top Early Learning Challenge (RTT-ELC) Sustainability Project. They also presented some updates to the Council on other matters.

The following comments were made:

- The team conducting the midcourse review of the Program Quality Awards has been working diligently to determine how to include Head Start programs in that system, since Head Start programs make significant contributions to the success of our state's multi sector, multi delivery early childhood education system. Although the specific details have yet to be determined, the team has decided that Head Start programs meeting the 10% CCAP enrollment threshold will be able to fully participate in the Program Quality Awards. Work on the details of the Program Quality Awards revisions will move quickly, within the next two weeks, and implementation will immediately follow. These details will be presented at the January 28th Program Standards and Quality Subcommittee meeting, to be held at the Warwick Public Library from 2-4 p.m. The team is continuing to examine the Program Quality Awards through a mid-course review in order to examine additional issues, including the participation of stand alone head start programs.
- Thank you to Lynda Dickinson, Aimee Mitchell and Mary Varr for bringing this information before the Council and to Mary Varr, specifically, for her leadership on the Access Subcommittee.
- Stand-alone Head Start programs should be included in the Program Quality Awards because they have 100% of children living below the poverty level. Therefore, by definition, they reach an even greater number of low income families than many of the programs meeting the 10% CCAP threshold currently required by the Program Quality Awards. The Program Quality Awards review team recognizes that they serve the poorest of the poor and will continue to evaluate the issue.
- Starry, Starry Night will be on January 21st at the Crowne Plaza from 6:00 to 8:00 p.m. There are 400-500 people expected to attend.

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- Health has launched its “Love that Baby” campaign. It is a family visiting recruitment campaign reaching out to pregnant and new parents through different delivery methods, including texting.

PRESENTATION: RTT-ELC SUSTAINABILITY PROJECT

Jeffrey Capizzano from The Policy Equity Group, Empowering the Socially Conscious, presented the RTT-ELC Sustainability Project. (See Slides.) Jeffrey is an expert in state and national early childhood policy and he was a Senior Policy Advisor at the Department of Health and Human Services. The following comments and questions were made:

- The systems reform initiated by the RTT-ELC grant brought together different state agencies and created a new early childhood system around them.
- A Sustainability Plan is necessary to maintain the momentum of the RTT-ELC work going forward, after the funding ends.
- The Sustainability Team consists of representatives from RIDE, DHS, DCYF and partner agencies.
- After an inventory of RTT-ELC projects is created, a set of criteria will be used to identify those projects that should be sustained beyond the grant. Once those projects are determined, the Sustainability Team will calculate the cost of sustaining those projects and will ascertain potential sources of funding, both new and existing, to sustain those projects.
- The staffing included under Grants Management refers to the staffing required for managing the entire grant. The staffing included under the other RTT-ELC projects refers to the staffing required for the individual activities occurring under each project.
- The following criteria will be used to determine if a project should be sustained, reframed or discontinued:
 - Where a project is in terms of the RTT-ELC grant goals
 - For example, if a project is only 30% completed then a conversation about sustainability might be premature.
 - How well a project aligns with state early childhood goals
 - This includes examining the Council’s Strategic Plan and the RIDE Transforming Education in Rhode Island Strategic Plan.
 - The realized or potential impact of the project on child and teacher outcomes
 - This will be determined by (1) examining research that explains the impact of a particular project on child and teacher outcomes, (2) listening to what the agencies administering the particular projects are saying about its potential impact on child and teacher outcomes, and (3) collecting anecdotal evidence from stakeholders about the potential impact on child and teacher outcomes.
- When a project needs to be reframed, that might include sustaining the project at a reduced funding level, which could require modifications to or reductions in the project’s activities.

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- What are the Sustainability Team's plans for integrating the strategic plan currently being developed by the Department of Education?
A: To the extent that information about that strategic plan is available, it will be used for determining a project's alignment with the state's early childhood goals. The Department of Education's Strategic Plan Design Team will be made aware of the connection between their work and the Sustainability Project.
- The Head Start Reauthorization Act of 2007 and the Childcare and Development Block Grant should be included in the Sources of Information that the Sustainability Team is consulting. Through these two pieces of legislation, the federal government first articulated the importance of child outcomes. Additionally, the Sources of Information should include the Early Learning Workforce Study conducted under the RTT-ELC grant and the baseline quality studies conducted prior to BrightStars rating the state's early childhood programs. The BrightStars validation study will not be completed in time to be included with the Sources of Information.

DISCUSSION AND INPUT ON SUSTAINABILITY PROJECT

Jeffrey Capizzano and Elizabeth Burke Bryant began the Council's discussion of the Sustainability Project. Key comments and questions included the following:

- How is the state's political leadership being engaged in the sustainability conversation, including the governor's office and the finance committee? Will the Council be asked to play an ambassadorial role?
A: There will be an organized process for determining potential sources of funding and the Sustainability Plan will include recommended strategies for securing those funding sources. The recommended strategies will also include suggestions on how to best engage the appropriate political leaders and will articulate the Council's role in the Sustainability Plan.
- There have been no recent rate increases in DHS funding for low income children, despite an increase in standards and requirements for programs. This funding base is insufficient to sustain the quality requested by the state. Additionally, the Childcare and Development Block Grant requires expanded access to childcare, which will cost the state more money. In order to sustain quality, this foundation of funding needs to be reexamined.
- How does the no cost extension fit into the Sustainability Plan?
A: It is a separate process, but it is connected. Sustainability planning will start sooner for those projects that are further along. For those projects that qualify for the no cost extension, their sustainability plan will begin later since their grant funding will continue until October 1, 2016.
- When examining a project's alignment to state early childhood goals, the Sustainability Team should consider the future workforce, both from a leadership and a classroom perspective. For example, they should think about who is coming into the field, how programs can attract the quality staff that they need, and how programs can keep the quality staff that they have. Wages are a huge issue in the early childhood field. Finding staff for infant and toddler care is especially difficult.

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- As part of the realized or potential impact of a project on child and teacher outcomes, the Sustainability Team should examine trend data on how the RTT-ELC grant has impacted particularly high risk groups of children, such as those with delays and disabilities, those with behavior disorders, and those living in poverty. Although this information will be more readily available once the data system is up and running, the stakeholder and agency interviews can tease out, anecdotally, the impact on these high risk groups.
- In addition to examining the realized or potential impact of projects on child and teacher outcomes, the Sustainability Team should examine the impact on parents, especially low income parents, with a specific focus on changes to those parents' expectations for child achievement.
- What are some of the unintended outcomes of the RTT-ELC work? For example, there may have been issues created around CCAP funding, infant toddler staff retention and leadership cultivation. Some decision-making by program has been affected by the RTT-ELC initiatives as well.
A: This information can be collected through anecdotal evidence. The Sustainability Team will also examine what would happen to projects in the absence of funding. Knowing the effect of a lack of funding will be helpful when engaging the state's political leadership and asking for additional funds.
- The sustainability discussion should include the experiences of children and families being served through the RTT-ELC initiatives and whether those children and families are being served by other programming as well.
- Focus groups are invaluable for gathering stakeholder input. Additionally, stakeholder input can be collected from groups already in existence, such as the Childcare Directors' Association.
- There should be conversations with people who have chosen not to engage in the RTT-ELC initiatives, if there are any.
- The impact of RTT-ELC projects on programs other than those in early childcare education should be considered. For example, the RTT-ELC projects have potentially impacted unemployment rates, child abuse rates and the number of early childhood injuries.
- The data system could be expanded to answer a broader range of questions in the community. However, with the recent linkage of KIDSNET to the data system, the current Rhode Island system is already transformational.
- The Sustainability Team should examine the impact of the RTT-ELC projects on the risks that the projects were originally intended to address, such as DCYF involvement.
- How will the Sustainability Team collect information on the impact to teacher outcomes?
A: Teachers can be reached through the RIELDS system or through the TEACH cohorts.

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- Many programs have developed their own sustainability plans for the changes they have implemented under the RTT-ELC grant and these plans should be considered when developing the state's Sustainability Plan.

Comments and questions from the public included:

- In addition to examining the realized or potential impact of projects on child and teacher outcomes, the impact on programs should also be considered. A strong program with a strong program management system will equal strong teachers and classrooms and will lead to positive child outcomes.
- In order to better frame the impact on child and teacher outcomes, the Sustainability Team should talk to other possible allies in the state that are outside of early childhood education, such as the Department of Labor and Training and the Governor's Workforce Board.
- Anecdotal evidence should be gathered from stakeholders in home visiting programs, including programs not specifically for childcare.

APPROVAL OF INFANT/TODDLER POLICY PRIORITIES

Leanne Barrett presented a draft of the Infant Toddler Policy Priorities agenda. (See handout.) Key comments and questions included:

- With the administrative changes happening in the state now, this is a great opportunity to identify and increase state focus on high priority items for infant toddler policies.
- The leadership team for this project was a public sector/private sector partnership including, Leanne Barrett and Susan Dickstein (RI Association for Infant Mental Health), Brenda DuHamel (EOHHS/EI), and Kristine Campagna (Health; Home Visiting). A steering committee of 20 people included representatives from infant toddler childcare, home visiting, pediatricians, EI, child welfare, and others. These teams were broader than the Council because infants and toddlers touch different parts of state policy as well as all departments in the state.
- In addition to Leanne's presentation of the Infant Toddler Policy Priorities to the Council in June and September, she also presented to Successful Start.
- Many of the recommendations in the draft agenda align with RTT-ELC goals.
- There will be minor changes to this document before it is released in March.
- Different groups across the state can use and refer to this document.
- On the bottom of the last page of the draft agenda, there is a space available for groups, such as the Council, Successful Start, the Providence Children and Youth Cabinet and EI ICC, to officially endorse or adopt these recommendations.

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- Under the Child Care section of High Quality Early Learning and Development Programs, what does “using state contracts” refer to?
A: State contracts are a recommended national strategy for improving infant toddler childcare. Although Rhode Island had a contract system in the past, Rhode Island is now a 100% voucher state which gives parents the choice to change programs if they are unhappy with a particular program. The contract system is similar to the state PreK program where the state awards a contract for a defined number of slots to programs meeting certain criteria determined by the state. This method stabilizes funding and, when used in conjunction with the vouchers, ensures the continuation of programs and, therefore, a broader choice for parents.
- These infant toddler policies should inform the RTT-ELC Sustainability Project, in the area of alignment with state early childhood goals, just like the strategic plans of the Council and RIDE.
- These policy priorities are just recommended because elected officials decide policy priorities.
- By unanimous vote, the Council agrees to approve, adopt and endorse this draft agenda for Infant Toddler Policy Priorities. (Pam High made the motion, Chris Amirault seconded)

PUBLIC COMMENT

Additional comments and questions from the public included:

- Is there a way to better inform teachers about the support systems and resources available to children and their families so that necessary interventions can be made earlier, thereby reducing the additional costs required by delayed interventions? Maybe that information could be included in Professional Development courses.
A: The Center for Early Learning Professionals and EI are working on getting the word out to the field, but, during the next fiscal year, Ruth Gallucci and Brenda DuHamel are also making it a priority to expand the knowledge of special education policies and procedures.

NEXT STEPS

The next Early Learning Council meeting will be on March 11th from 11:30-2:00 at Save the Bay. There will be an additional meeting added sometime in April to further discuss the Sustainability Project. Karen Beese forwarded a welcome by the new director nominee at DHS, Melba DePeña Affigne.