

THE VISION

TO BE ONE OF THE BEST STATES IN WHICH TO RAISE A CHILD

Children are the building blocks of our society. When our youngest children thrive, we all benefit. The first five years of a child's life represents an important opportunity. When children have positive early experiences, they are more likely to succeed in school, lead healthier lives and contribute to creating stronger communities. Valuing the importance of the early years, the state of Michigan has set a bold vision to be one of the best states in which to raise a child.

WE WANT TO HEAR FROM YOU!

We are inviting additional input from families, early childhood providers, and other community leaders. Your feedback is critical to helping realize the vision of ensuring all children and families can choose and receive the services and programs they need.

Share Feedback on Initial Needs Assessment Findings and Strategic Plan

Feedback will be accepted through 5:00pm on Friday, February 7, 2020.



Questions about the needs assessment? Contact Dr. Ann-Marie Faria at afaria@air.org



Questions about the strategic plan? Contact Paula Lin at lin@schoolreadinessconsulting.com

THE OPPORTUNITY

In 2019, Michigan was awarded federal funding through the Preschool Development Grant Birth through Five (PDG B-5). This is an important step in achieving the state's vision to strengthen programs that support children's healthy growth and learning.

Through the PDG B-5 work, the state seeks to:

- Improve **prenatal care** leading to healthy pregnancies and births;
- Support child **health, mental health and nutrition**;
- Increase access to and improving the quality of **early learning** services;
- Strengthen **transitions and alignment** across programs; and
- Create efficiency and sustainability within a **coordinated system**.

Key activities of the PDG B-5 grant were designed to:



Conduct a **needs assessment** to understand what's working, what's not working as well as it should, and new opportunities for the early childhood system



Develop an **updated strategic plan** to address unmet needs and guide future investments in young children and families in the state



NEEDS ASSESSMENT

Michigan's PDG B-5 needs assessment was conducted by American Institutes for Research and highlighted some important realities of the state's early childhood system, especially related to early care and education.



Michigan is home to
673,923
children birth to age 5



Early care and education programs
have the capacity to serve
less than half
of Michigan's eligible 4 year olds



Access to high-quality child care for
infants and toddlers
is a challenge across the state



Child care is
too expensive
for the average family to afford
even with financial assistance

The needs assessment analyzed state and local data, as well as interviews and focus groups with families, early childhood providers and other community and agency leaders. The needs assessment found:

AVAILABILITY. The most pressing need across the mixed delivery system is the lack of available programs for infants, toddlers, and preschool aged children and their families. This pattern is consistent for all ages of children served from infants through preschool aged children and across service type (child care, home visiting, specialized services).

AFFORDABILITY. Affordability of services is a challenge across the state, especially for infant-toddler child care.

EQUITY. Gaps in the early childhood system more severely impact specific groups. Families living in rural communities, Black and Latinx families, and children who experience other risk factors, such as poverty, homelessness, or immigrant/ refugee status, face exacerbated access, quality, and affordability gaps.

WORKFORCE. Developing and sustaining a pipeline of early childhood professionals is costly and remains a challenge across the state.

DIVERSITY AND REPRESENTATION. There is a lack of providers who represent the culture, language, and racial identities of the children served within the system.

TRANSITIONS. Transition processes are inconsistent across the state. While some regions have high quality supports for transitions, there is not a systematic statewide approach to transitions. This is true for transitions within the B-5 system and between B-5 and K-12 settings.

FAMILY CHOICE. Family choice is severely limited by the lack of options for services for young children available in most communities (e.g., lack of child care options, lack of home visiting options/slots, limited Early On capacity, etc.).

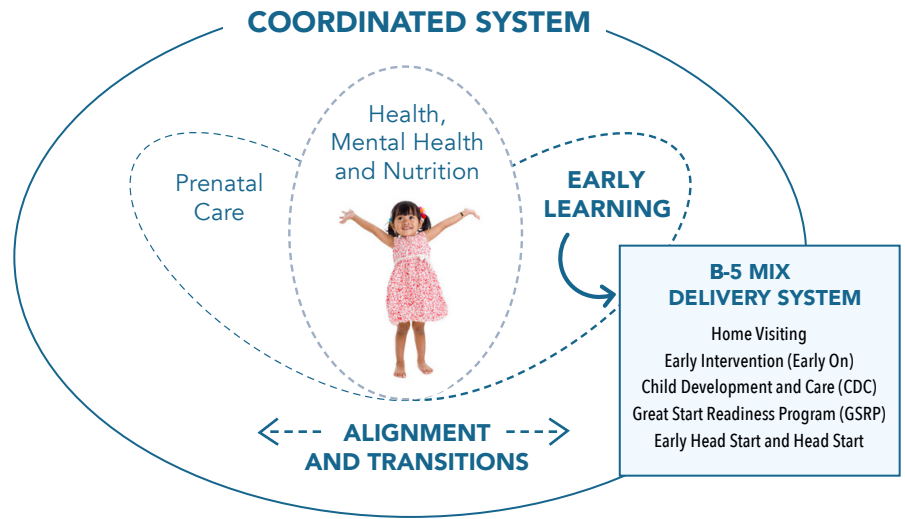
DATA. Data gaps exist across the ECE system, limiting knowledge about practice and undermining informed decision-making both at the state and local levels.

COLLABORATION AND ALIGNMENT. Systems-level collaboration remains a challenge.



STRATEGIC PLANNING

Informed by the needs assessment findings, Michigan developed the *Strategic Plan for B-5 Mixed Delivery*. This initial plan focuses on the B-5 mixed delivery system and addresses early learning, alignment and transitions, and systems coordination. Future drafts of the strategic plan will incorporate priorities and action steps that focus on the key positive outcomes for young children—like prenatal care, health, mental health and nutrition.



EARLY LEARNING

PRIORITY AREA #1: ENGAGE FAMILIES AS PARTNERS AND LEADERS

Families are a vital part of the early learning system. Fully supporting children in early learning programs means making sure that families are supported and engaged as partners in educating their young children.

THIS MEANS:

- Increasing access and coordination of home visiting programs
- Expanding multi-generation initiatives, parenting education, and other family support programs
- Expanding training for the statewide Family Engagement framework
- Improving outreach and communication with families to share information and connect to early learning programs

PRIORITY AREA #2: INCREASE ACCESS TO QUALITY PROGRAMMING

Families want and deserve the opportunity to choose programs that best meet their needs. This requires that programs statewide are in good supply, and that they are universally accessible, affordable, and high-quality.

THIS MEANS:

- Eliminating obstacles to enrollment and barriers to participation
- Improving access to the child care assistance program
- Strengthening the quality of existing early learning programs
- Expanding the capacity of high-quality early learning programs in communities where significant access gaps exist

ALIGNMENT & TRANSITIONS

PRIORITY AREA #3: ENSURE CONTINUITY OF CARE

School readiness is as much about schools being ready to support children as it is about children's readiness skills. It is the role of the state to create alignment across program types, and to support transition efforts.

THIS MEANS:

- Strengthening alignment and coordination of experiences in early childhood programs and K-12 settings
- Increasing support for children and families as they transition between early childhood programs and move into kindergarten

COORDINATED SYSTEM

PRIORITY AREA #4: STRENGTHEN THE GOVERNANCE STRUCTURE

Key to systems coordination is the state's ability to effectively make decisions. The state can do this by setting up a governance structure that places important decisions in the right hands and creating strong connections between those decision-makers.

THIS MEANS:

- Mapping what is needed to achieve Michigan's strategic goals
- Revising state and local leadership structures to execute the Strategic Plan
- Improving ongoing communication and expanding staff to support collaboration between state and local leadership structures

PRIORITY AREA #5: IMPROVE DATA-DRIVEN DECISION MAKING

The state can further improve its ability make sound decisions about its early childhood system by creating a culture of data use – and the data systems to support it.

THIS MEANS:

- Identifying the state's most important unanswered data questions
- Improving, integrating, and sharing data across programs
- Strengthening the state's data system
- Leveraging data to better support programs, families and communities

PRIORITY AREA #6: LEVERAGE RESOURCES AND FUNDING

To maximize resources supporting young children, the state must streamline and strengthen sustainability of funding.

THIS MEANS:

- Conducting a cost study to determine what it would actually cost to fund the system
- Prioritizing investments in parts of the system that have been historically underfunded
- Creating efficiency by coordinating funding streams
- Increasing overall investment in early childhood

PRIORITY AREA #7: BUILD CAPACITY OF EARLY CHILDHOOD WORKFORCE

With additional compensation, career pathways, and professional development, Michigan can attract a diverse, culturally competent workforce who is incentivized to remain and grow in the field.

THIS MEANS:

- Elevating compensation—both pay and benefits
- Continuing to improve career pathways with an emphasis on increasing diversity of early childhood providers
- Preparing the workforce to meet the needs of all children through ongoing professional development

PRIORITY AREA #8: ADVANCE EQUITY

Achieving equity would mean that race, language and other social factors are affirmed as strengths. This will require specific action by the state to remove barriers for children, families, and providers through targeted shifts in policy and practice.

THIS MEANS:

- Promoting equity through leadership training, embedding equity values, and using data to reflect the state's commitment
- Addressing existing inequities through leadership and policies that reflect diverse identities and voices
- Elevating the voices of families and communities in decision-making

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