



The Build Initiative: *Building Early Learning Systems in the States*

Build Funders

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About Build

The Build Initiative is a multi-state partnership that helps states construct a coordinated system of programs, policies and services that responds to the needs of young children and their families. It does this by supporting those who set policies, provide services, and advocate for children from birth through age five so that our youngest children are safe, healthy, eager to learn, and ready to succeed in school. Build serves as a catalyst for change and a national resource on early learning.

The Build Initiative was created by the Early Childhood Funders' Collaborative (ECFC), a consortium of national and local foundations that have substantial grantmaking programs in early childhood care and education. The ECFC provides networking, information sharing and strategic grantmaking opportunities to its members. Through its work, the ECFC has recognized that current programs, policies and services for young children and their families often operate in isolation, at cross purposes, or without enough resources to meet critical needs. In response, the ECFC created Build to invest private funds to stimulate public investments in early learning.

Build States

The Build Initiative currently funds work in five states – Illinois, Minnesota, New Jersey, Ohio, and Pennsylvania. These states were selected based on a number of criteria, including their readiness to construct comprehensive systems for early care and education. Each state has received a \$350,000 grant for the first 18-24 months of implementation. The Build Initiative provides this funding and ongoing technical assistance to support the states in:

- Reforming existing state systems,
- Testing new models,
- Connecting and coordinating programs and services, and
- Helping to ensure that all young children have access to early learning systems that result in school readiness.

Build states identify and achieve measurable outcomes in areas such as infrastructure development, quality improvement, evaluation, financing, and public engagement.

A lead organization in each state engages a diverse team of stakeholders in planning and implementing strategies to create statewide early learning systems. Drawn from the public and private sectors, the stakeholder teams are comprised of state agency officials, service providers, business and community leaders, parents, advocates and others who work with children.

A project of the Early Childhood Funders' Collaborative supporting state efforts to prepare our youngest children for a successful future.

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Flexibility is a hallmark of Build. The initiative recognizes that states must meet their goals in diverse ways, based on their unique history, political climate, leadership, resources, capacity and public will. Although the specific work in each state varies, the Build Initiative does not focus on providing direct services but on connecting programs and infrastructure into a coordinated system of policies and services. Examples of work underway in Build states include analyzing research and data, developing and implementing early learning standards, implementing professional development initiatives, strengthening linkages between state and local service delivery systems, developing public awareness campaigns, and evaluating public policy.

A Learning Community

The Build Initiative is committed to increasing the understanding of effective strategies for building an early learning system. To do this, it facilitates opportunities among the Build states and four other “learning community” states – Hawaii, Michigan, Oklahoma, and Washington – to join national experts and others in exchanging information, sharing ideas and discussing the challenges they are facing. Learning opportunities take many forms, using multiple communications tools, including Internet technology, conference calls, multi-state discussions, meetings, and written materials.

Learning community participants include public and private sector leaders who are working to advance the early learning agenda in their states. They can engage in activities that best fit their needs and interests. Currently the learning community is examining and sharing best practices in the areas of governance, financing and quality.

Moving Forward Together

The Build Initiative brings together a group of diverse individuals and organizations that are moving toward the same vision, but in a collaborative, flexible way.

The Funders’ Advisory Council, made up of members of the ECFC, works closely with Build staff and provides broad strategic oversight to the initiative. The Civil Society Institute (CSI), based in Newton, MA, is Build’s fiscal sponsor. CSI manages and supports the Build team, which includes a project director and two part-time consultants. The Child and Family Policy Center in Des Moines, IA provides evaluation services to the initiative.

All of these individuals and organizations are united by their common dedication to improving resources and opportunities for all young children, ensuring they have the foundations they need to thrive and reach their full potential.

Please visit our website at
www.buildinitiative.org.

Build
Strong Foundations For
Our Youngest Children