Enhancing NH’s Early Childhood Governance and Data Systems

Throughout 2020 to 2023, the NH renewal Preschool Development Grant (NH PDG) was a collaboration between the University of New Hampshire (UNH), NH’s Department of Health and Human Services (DHHS), NH’s Department of Education (NHED), and the Council for Thriving Children. The grant sought to improve the overall quality of early childhood programs and services through data-driven decision-making and increased coordination among financing mechanisms and governance. This brief presents three highlighted initiatives that NH PDG funded in support of this goal, the key successes of each initiative, and future opportunities.

Early Childhood Data System Coordination & Integration

NH PDG invested in data system enhancements to integrate program-level data and encourage data-driven decision-making across programs and organizations serving children and families.

- **Funded a Council for Thriving Children Business Analyst** who supported the development of NH’s Early Childhood Integrated Data System and a visual plan for integrating 38 programs and 24 data systems within DHHS’ and NHED’s inventory of funded programs.
- **Empowered Family Resource Centers to employ data-driven decision-making** through the development of the NH Children’s Trust’s Family Support Data System, which monitors families’ reported needs and access to services and programs.
- **Established policies to align the Early Childhood Integrated Data System efforts with an existing data platform** and guide integration for early childhood programs within DHHS.
- **Supported development of several internal analytic data dashboards**, including the Comprehensive Family Support Services and Department of Children, Youth, and Families Outcomes Dashboard.

DHHS will continue to use the enhanced data governance structures and dashboards and explore new and expanded programs to integrate into the Early Childhood Integrated Data System to encourage continued and increased data-driven decision-making within the department.

NH’s Early Childhood Governance Structure

NH PDG-funded staff positions fostered coordination and collaboration across state agencies.

- **Council for Thriving Children Director**
  - Contributed to updating of the state’s Strategic Plan for Early Childhood by engaging stakeholders across the governance system and early childhood sector.
  - Served on other relevant advisory bodies, including the Child Care Advisory Council and the Wellness and Primary Prevention Council.

- **Support for DHHS and NHED Integration Efforts**
  - Department Affiliates and Coordinator staff positions supported Early Childhood Integration Teams to improve coordination and communication within and across DHHS and NHED.
  - Contributed to development of common definitions for early childhood system terms.
  - Extended DHHS-funded Community Health Worker training on interpersonal communication to early childhood agency staff.
  - Supported NHED’s Leaning into Literacy Initiative with Lexia (LETRS training).

The Council Director will continue in their role through at least December 2024 and the NHED and DHHS Early Childhood Integration Teams continue to operate, with support from permanent DHHS and NHED staff.
Statewide System of Regional Early Childhood Partnerships

NH PDG sought to improve early childhood system capacity and coordination across the state through two sub-grant initiatives to directly fund local and regional early childhood organizations.

$3 Million awarded over 2020-2021 to 14 NH PDG Community Grantees
- **Capacity-Building Grants** funded infrastructure for local early childhood cross-sector collaboration and service alignment.
- **Implementation & Expansion Grants** funded 12 local programs to address areas of need identified for each community.

More than $4.5 Million awarded over 2021-2023 to 7 Regional Partnership Grantees (see map below)
- **Established Regional Early Childhood System** and funded regions to enhance early childhood-family support collaborations and build infrastructure.
- **Project-Specific Grants** funded 18 programs to address areas of need identified for each region.

While NH PDG funded the Regional Partnership Grants through June 2023, DHHS issued follow-up funding in July 2023 for each region to continue capacity-building and coordination efforts and funded NH Children’s Trust to serve as a facilitating organization for the regional system.

Regional Partnership Grants Highlighted Accomplishments

- **Region 1**
  - Sponsored 15 trainings for 222 individuals to strengthen early childhood services.

- **Region 2**
  - Developed 2-year regional early childhood strategic plan, which was incorporated into Capitol Area Community Health Improvement Plan to sustain the work.

- **Region 3**
  - Engaged in extensive outreach to town-level stakeholders to formalize regional infrastructure.

- **Region 4**
  - Developed regional early childhood strategic plan based on local needs assessment and data.

- **Region 5**
  - Collaborated with Alliance of Regional Early Childhood Coalitions to align regional efforts to state’s Strategic Plan for Early Childhood.

- **Region 6**
  - Developed regional data dashboard that tracks population trends, social determinants of health, and accessible program/service data for the region.