

The Improving Head Start for School Readiness Act of 2007 provides for the designation and establishment of Early Childhood Advisory Councils to facilitate and enhance high-quality early childhood systems. The Kansas Early Childhood Advisory Council (ECAC) builds on a strong foundation of early childhood systems building, and is a further evolution of the Kansas Early Learning Coordinating Council (ELCC) which has, for the past five years, provided oversight to the Kansas Early Childhood Comprehensive Systems (KECCS) Plan. The following narrative documents the progression of KECCS and proposes infrastructure support to solidify the structure, including personnel, policies, and services in order to institutionalize a seamless early childhood system in Kansas.

(a) Objectives and Need for Assistance

Clearly identify the physical, economic, social, financial, institutional, and/or other problem(s) requiring a solution.

In Kansas, early childhood has been acknowledged as a point of intervention that can tip the scales and mitigate risk factors that lead to negative societal impacts such as unemployment, chronic diseases, substance abuse, incarceration, and more. A focus on the early years of life, including prenatal services, is the nexus of policy and programming discussions among the Governor, legislators, business leaders, and the early childhood community. As indicated by former Governor Kathleen Sebelius during her 2008 State of the State Address, “we can’t afford for any of our young Kansans to be so far behind that they never catch up by the time they enter kindergarten.” Indeed, research clearly articulates the importance of the early childhood years on school and life success (Shonkoff & Meisels, ed., 2000; Perry, Kaufmann, & Knitzer, ed., 2007).

The importance of a systemic approach to early childhood is emphasized by the Early Childhood Federal Partners Workgroup, and through work of partners such as the BUILD Initiative, for example. The PreK Now and Zero to Three document, “Common Vision, Different Paths,” states that coordinated services and systems are essential to “[ensuring] adequate availability, high quality, strong oversight and accountability, and continuity of services across settings and age groups.” When services and programs are not purposefully coordinated on the state and agency level, children and families do not receive the services they need. Parents around the country underscored this point – including a focus group conducted by the ECCS technical assistance provider and more recent parent focus groups in Kansas.

Since 2003, over 100 partner organizations representing both state and local partners participated in planning and implementation of the KECCS Plan. Twenty-three members of the ELCC, representing a cross-discipline continuum of services to support young children and their families, meet monthly to provide guidance and leadership to the Plan. This work significantly impacted policies, programs and services in the State. The successes of the Plan are numerous, including increased collaboration among early childhood leadership and stakeholders, an additional \$14 million in state funding for early childhood, and community-level planning to support early childhood systems. The Plan provides a guiding framework for early childhood at the state and local levels that ensure resources and activities are directed at a common goal – ensuring that Kansas is a ready state with an infrastructure to support communities, families, and schools so that children are prepared to succeed.

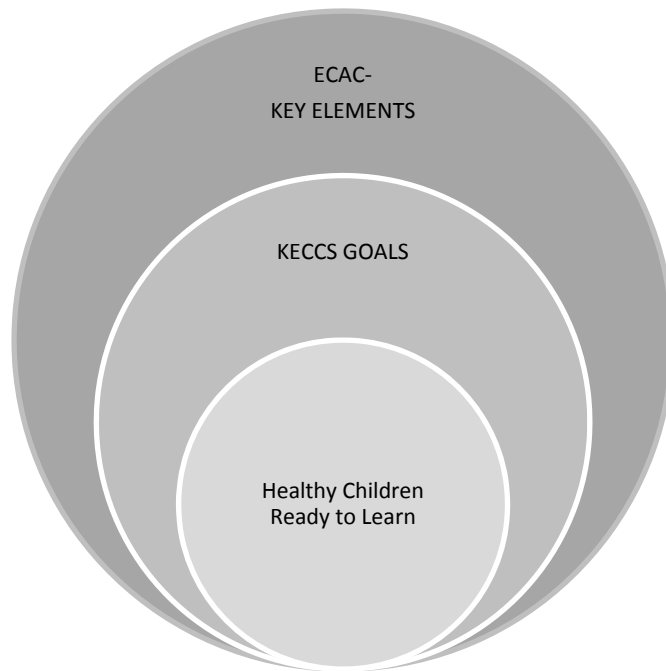
The KECCS Plan is an important guiding framework for the state and the significant impacts of the Plan highlight the need for the work to continue. This work will be supported by the Kansas ECAC. As in many states, Kansas faces significant budget challenges on the state

level. Not only will this limit new state resources directed toward early childhood, but budget cuts may also have a negative impact on existing funding streams that provide vital services, programs, and support for young children and their families. Even greater collaboration, coordination, and resource-sharing will be required. ECAC will provide the resources and the format to institutionalize the early childhood system while sustaining funding structures, policymaking and service-delivery.

As Governor Mark Parkinson begins his tenure replacing former governor and current U.S. Secretary of Health and Human Services Kathleen Sebelius, the KECCS Plan provides his new administration with a clear, systematic approach to early childhood that maximizes collaboration and reduces duplication of services to promote the availability and quality of services to children from birth to age five.

The systems building efforts through the KECCS have focused largely on programmatic strategies that support the goals of the Plan: health, mental health, early care and education, parent education, and family supports. This unifying framework has resulted in increased collaboration and funding. Now, in order to solidify the Kansas early childhood system, further development of the infrastructure is needed to support and maintain progress in the KECCS goal areas. In Kansas, while work on the programmatic strategies continues, focus has been placed on the seven key elements of early childhood comprehensive systems identified by the Early Childhood Systems Working Group. The alignment of the KECCS goals and key elements (leadership, financing, standards, monitoring/accountability, provider/practitioner support, family leadership development, and communications) are depicted below in Figure 1.

Figure 1. Alignment of Key Elements and KECCS Goals.



The success of the KECCS Plan is dependent on the key elements and stakeholders' ability to provide the support and services, across all domains, needed to ensure children are ready for school. Kansas has made progress on the key elements, but the ECAC grant will facilitate the infrastructure development needed for sustainability and long-term success. A brief summary of the seven key elements of the KECCS Plan follows, including the elements on which the ECAC will focus over the next three years.

1. Financing: In Kansas, state and community agencies employed numerous financing strategies to utilize the limited resources available. A few of the strategies are mentioned here—a financial scan of state early childhood program funding streams; consolidation and concentration of Children's Initiative Funds (CIF), which are from the Tobacco Master Settlement; on early childhood, including the Early Childhood Block Grant; and, local/community blending and braiding of early childhood funding streams. In early 2010,

the Kansas Project LAUNCH initiative will undertake a more comprehensive financial scan that isolates B-5 funding.

- Funding streams. In 2005, Kansas first conducted a financial scan of early childhood funding streams to ascertain the amount of public and private monies invested in early childhood. The initial scan and updates were useful in developing an understanding of the coordination of federal, state, and other funds that support children and family services across agencies and goal areas. A partial scan was presented to the P-20 Council in 2009 to begin conversations about early childhood and is included in Table 1 below. While the scan is an important tool in capturing the multiple sources of support for early childhood agencies and programs, a consistent challenge is the limitation of the available data. For many sources, it is difficult to separate funds designated for birth to five services from funds designated to serve a broader age range, such as birth to 18. However, coordination and awareness of funding streams was an important component of the success of the early childhood system in Kansas. For example, a Legislative Post Audit conducted in 2007 provided a critical outside review of early childhood programs. The Audit showed that for FY06, the Governor's Budget listed 219 programs and reported total spending of nearly \$4.4 billion on programs for children birth to 18. The largest expenditure was for education at \$3.1 billion including aid to K-12 education, special education, and other educational programs. The Audit identified 20 State-administered and three federally administered programs that focus primarily on providing services to children ages birth to five. These programs fell into several broad categories including education, health, and social services/safety, and accounted for about \$310

million in spending, of which about two-thirds was federal funds. Early childhood programs reported serving approximately 500,000 children in FY06. Overall, the Audit showed early childhood programs were successful in maximizing the funding available for birth to five services, and that services were largely coordinated at the state and local levels. Despite successes, there is still additional work needed to build an integrated system of early childhood funding.

Table 1. Kansas Early Childhood Funding Streams, 2008.

Programs	Agency	State (Millions)	Federal (Millions)	CIF (Millions)	TOTAL
Kansas Smart Start	KCCTF			\$8.40	\$8.40
Child Care Licensing & Regulation	KDHE	\$1.60	\$3.54		\$5.14
Infants and Toddlers with Disabilities (Part C)	KDHE	\$3.95	\$4.0	**\$1.35	\$9.30
Parents as Teachers	KSDE	\$7.50			\$7.50
Migrant Family Literacy (Even Start)	KSDE	\$0.98			\$0.98
Four-Year-Old At Risk	KSDE	\$17.85			\$17.85
Pre-K Pilot	KSDE			\$5.00	\$5.00
Kansas Early Head Start	SRS	\$9.70		\$1.60	\$11.30
Early Head Start (Federal)	SRS		\$6.0		\$6.00
Child Care Assistance	SRS	\$19.82	\$56.84	\$1.40	\$78.06
Resource and Referral/Professional Dev.	SRS		\$3.00		\$3.00
Child Care Quality Initiative	SRS		\$5.34	\$0.50	\$5.84
Head Start			\$45.20		\$45.20
TOTAL FY08		\$61.40	\$123.92	\$18.25	\$203.57
INCREASE FOR FY09					
Early Childhood	KCCTF			\$11.10	

Block Grant					
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- Children’s Initiative Funds (CIF). Ninety-five percent of the state's portion of the Tobacco Master Settlement dollars was dedicated to improving the health and well-being of children and youth in the state. The Kansas Children's Cabinet, established in 1999, oversees the expenditures from the Master Tobacco Settlement through the Children’s Initiative Fund. The Cabinet identified early childhood as a funding priority for CIF. In FY 2008 \$29,243,279 (48.2% of the total \$60,751,279) was allocated for early childhood programming.
- Early Childhood Block Grants. In 2008, former Governor Sebelius proposed and the Kansas Legislature passed an \$11.1 million Early Childhood Block Grant, which made available new statewide funding providing services and programs to at-risk and underserved children, birth through age five. Administered by the KCCTF, the Block Grant dollars provided a mechanism to specifically address the needs of the most at-risk and underserved children in Kansas. The application required all applicants to incorporate the KECCS Plan goals and objectives in the proposed services.
- Local blending and braiding of funding. In 2007, 13 community collaborations were awarded Early Childhood Comprehensive Planning grants to identify community needs and design a collaborative and comprehensive systems plan to address these needs. Blending and braiding of funds were key elements of these grants to provide integrated services to families and were a priority of the planning process. Additionally, in 2008, early childhood partners convened a conference on blending teaching & braiding funding of special education, Head Start and community services. The conference is an example of ongoing technical assistance and supports

to communities and early childhood programs in maximizing resources in innovative ways. In addition, partners, including the Kansas Department of Social and Rehabilitation Services, Kansas State Department of Education, Kansas Department of Health and Environment, Smart Start and other organizations have made progress providing guidance and support to promote blending and braiding of funding at the local level.

2. Leadership (*addressed through ECAC*): During ongoing discussions in the Legislature about leadership of an integrated early childhood system, the ELCC and KECCS stakeholders' use of a unified approach was instrumental in establishing the KECCS Plan as "the" state plan. With strong gubernatorial support and bi-partisan interest in the State legislature, the Plan became the basis for decision-making and discussions about early childhood. For example, during a 2010 Commission hearing in the fall of 2008, the Chairperson boasted that the KECCS Plan was perhaps the best document to come out of state government.

Kansas explored leadership models from other states, and worked closely with the National Governors Association and Ounce of Prevention to identify resources to support ongoing discussion about early childhood leadership. Building on the success of the collaborative structure of the ELCC, steps have already been taken to further coordinate early childhood leadership in the State. For example, the Early Childhood Block Grants provide an opportunity to examine and address challenges to service integration. The three-year grants provide a cost-effective laboratory to explore various collaboration structures that best fit the needs of the State. The results will be useful for other states interested in exploring alternative collaboration models.

Another example of coordinated early childhood leadership is the administration of the Pre-K Pilot, using CIF dollars in 2006. For the first two years, the Pilot program was administered through the KCCTF. In May of 2008, the program was moved to the Kansas State Department of Education to be administered while continuing to receive CIF funding. The Pre-K Pilot was named the Kansas Preschool Program (KPP) during 2008-2009. The KPP is moving toward incorporating the requirements of the Pre-K Pilot and those of the Four Year Old At-Risk program, also administered by KSDE. The KPP will require community collaboration to provide high quality early learning experiences for three to five year olds in Kansas.

The Kansas ECAC will provide guidance and leadership to ensure that all families with young children have access to a statewide system of integrated services (ECAC Goal 1).

3. Family Leadership Development: Family Leadership Development remains a priority focus in Kansas. Currently, there are pockets of strong, quality agency and community-based parent initiatives. Efforts to strengthen the leadership and involvement of parents in the KECCS and Kansas Strengthening Families initiatives are underway, including incorporation of results from the Kansas Parent Research Initiative. This initiative uses a developmental evaluation approach to gather information about how parents understand involvement, what their priorities are, what outcomes they desire, and finally, what strategies should be used to increase parent involvement in early childhood. The parent focus group results have been presented to a group of parents at the State's Parent Leadership Conference. Opportunities for feedback through a Parent Café provided additional insight into next steps. Research shows that it takes three to five years to engage parents, which presents a real challenge in developing effective parent leadership for early childhood. Understandably, the development of authentic parent leadership and involvement will take time. By building a system of parent

involvement and leadership from the ground up, the KECCS approach will address barriers to involvement from parent and agency perspectives to inform strategies at the individual, agency, and state levels. A multi-agency steering committee, including parent representatives, guided the process since its inception, including facilitating focus groups and pooling funding to support the effort.

4. Provider/Practitioner Support (*addressed through ECAC*): A planning group, comprised of over 60 stakeholders from state and local agencies, child care centers and family homes, and higher education, started working with the National Child Care Information and Technical Assistance Center (NCCIC) specialist to develop a Professional Development Strategic Plan that will function as a roadmap for professional development activities in the state. Initial discussions led to general agreement across partner agencies about the need to establish an integrated statewide professional development system for the early childhood workforce to achieve high quality care and education for all Kansas children. In addition, partners from Kansas participated in a September 2009, Region VII Administration for Children and Families meeting that brought together representatives from child care, Head Start, and education from across Kansas, Missouri, Nebraska, and Iowa as part of a Region VII Partners Leadership Team. As a result of this meeting, a regional strategic plan will be developed over the next 12 months to build stronger links in professional development, collaboration, funding, and data collection, with the goal of addressing gaps in each of these areas across the four states. The strategic plan will include state pre-k initiatives, federal CCDF priorities, and Head Start to improve the quality, availability, and coordination of services for children from birth to school entry. The efforts will also include school-age and afterschool care.

Through the Kansas ECAC early childhood professionals will be supported in ongoing education, training, and career advancement through a coordinated professional development system (ECAC Goal 2). CCDF funding priorities, such as parental choice, family cost sharing, and health and safety requirements, will be addressed throughout the planning activities.

5. Communication (addressed through ECAC): The KECCS Plan has an extensive communication system in place to inform providers, practitioners, and family members about effective strategies to support child development. The Plan website (www.keccs.org) is the clearinghouse for KECCS activities and also provides state and national resources for stakeholders about new strategies, community tools, research, grant opportunities, and other pertinent information. Other target audiences for the website are legislators, businesses, and foundations. Through monthly website statistics and feedback from the Legislative Audit, the website is perceived as the information gateway to early childhood activities in Kansas. In addition, a number of partner agencies are used regularly as a source of information for early childhood professionals as well as parents throughout the state. There remain attempts to link the sites and ensure that information is available and accessible.

The 2009 KECCS Impact Survey highlights the importance of the established communication mechanisms to the success of the Plan. Survey responses indicate that the Plan folders, graphics, and stakeholder meetings are the most useful KECCS products and activities to support agency work. Plan folders and graphics are available to all stakeholders to use for community or agency events and planning. Large format versions of the Plan graphic are posted at the Children's Cabinet and are available to stakeholders for planning meetings. Semi-annual stakeholder meetings keep Plan partners informed about the Plan, provide the launching ground for implementing new strategies, and offer networking opportunities for partners. In addition,

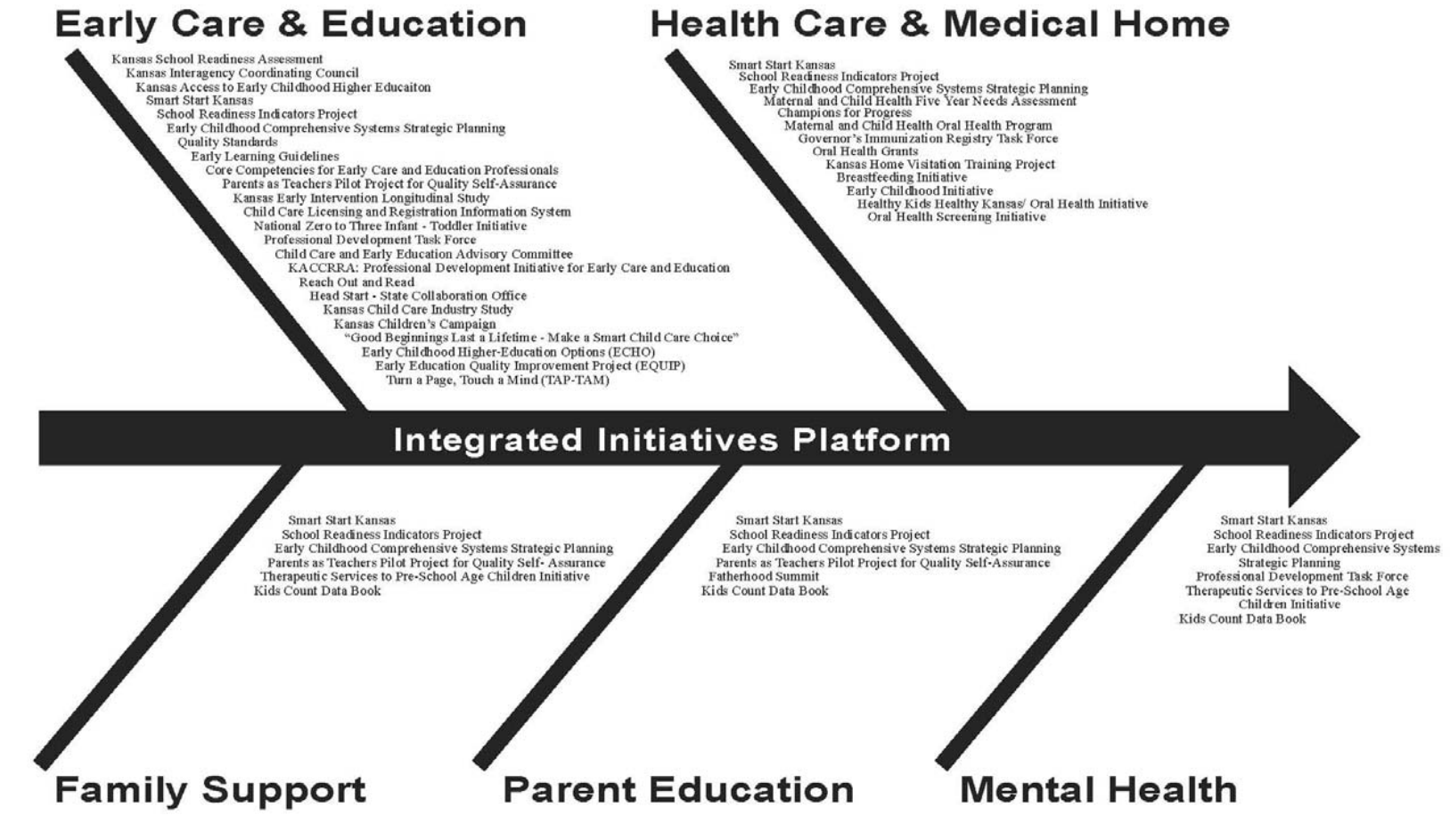
monthly newsletters connect stakeholders to the latest research and happenings around the State and nation. The Survey results reinforce the functionality of the existing communication structure to support the Plan and provide a unifying framework for early childhood.

In addition to the communication vehicles mentioned above, Kansas is exploring alternative social networking sites to connect parents to the Plan and to each other. Technology can address barriers such as engaging hard-to-reach families and the stigma associated with services. Worldwide, more than one-fifth of the population has internet access through home computers, libraries, schools, employment, or other sources. Over 70% of the United States population has Internet access, and the number continues to grow (Internet World Stats, 2008). The Internet can open new lines of communication to initiate or strengthen social ties between individuals (Haythornthwaite, 2005). Kansas is exploring virtual social networking platforms such as Facebook, MySpace, and chat room forums as a means of information sharing and relationship building. Using successes of virtual social networking in other states such as West Virginia, a social media plan will be developed and utilized as a tool for ongoing communication with stakeholders, parents, policymakers, and others.

The Kansas ECAC will explore additional communication structures that will support systems development efforts. While the existing modes of communication are effective and valued for their information sharing and relationship building, a more formalized communication structure with feedback loops is needed. The Kansas ECAC will develop a communication plan and structure that recognizes and addresses the dynamics of the system and ensures information sharing and facilitates feedback from a broad range of stakeholders (ECAC Goal 1).

Figure 2 shows a 2005 visual representation of the agencies and programs that comprise the integrated services delivery system in Kansas. (The converging systems diagram is based on service information collected through the original KECCS environmental scan, and will be updated in the next year to reflect systems changes identified through ECAC.) Although agencies and programs provide numerous services across many KECCS goal areas, the integrated platform is organized by goal area to demonstrate how individual entities work together to form an integrated system.

Figure 2. Kansas early childhood converging systems diagram, 2005.



6. Standards: The KECCS Plan is derived from evidence-based practices. Since the inception of the ECCS program, placed an emphasis on implementing high quality, research based practices. Each of the goal areas aligns with national, state, and field standards to ensure that families receive effective services. Partnerships with researchers in higher education based on specific curricula assist agencies and communities in addressing fidelity in implementation.

Specifically, standards for professionals (Core Competencies for Early Care and Education Professionals in Kansas and Missouri) and for child development (Early Learning Guidelines and Standards) guided efforts in early care and education. Early care and education partners adhere to increasingly strict quality standards, including individual program standards and those set by state policy and research including the KQRS and the NIEER standards. Key partners include Head Start, Early Head Start, Parents as Teachers, and the Kansas Preschool Program, and others. Quality standards are the basis for progress on a statewide system for professional development, detailed in the KECCS Work Plan. The Child Care Licensing BEST (Budget Efficiency Savings Team) Team, currently reviewing state regulations, uses guiding documents such as Caring for Our Children and Stepping Stones as the foundation for the discussion and recommendations.

The Kansas ECAC will focus on further implementation of Standards. Specifically, all early childhood providers will use the Kansas Early Learning Guidelines and Standards and evidence-based practices in program planning and service delivery to increase the number of children entering kindergarten ready to learn (ECAC Goal 4).

7. Monitoring and Accountability (*addressed through ECAC*): Evaluation of the KECCS Plan, including monitoring and accountability, occurs on two levels—goal areas and systems

evaluation. Previously, nearly 50 indicators were identified as part of the Plan, and tracking and monitoring progress was a significant challenge while monitoring progress on the goal areas. Early childhood leadership recently completed a Results-Based Accountability process that culminated in a list of approximately 25 state-level indicators that will be tracked across the five KECCS goal areas on an annual basis. On the systems level, evaluators will continue to use the Levels of Collaboration Scale to measure collaboration across ECAC partners. Other measures of systems change such as new projects, collaborative efforts, braided funding and level of connections will be assessed.

The Kansas ECAC will facilitate coordination with state agencies in the development of a coordinated, birth through 20, longitudinal data system to support both evidence-based practices and research efforts (ECAC Goal 3). The ECAC will provide the needed infrastructure support to move forward with data collection efforts, and will provide a mechanism to manage data to track progress, to make program and service decisions, and to guide research in the state on effectiveness of the early childhood system.

Kansas has had success in developing a collaborative, comprehensive system that addresses the needs of young children and families across the State. However, key structural elements to address the unique needs of the most at-risk children are insufficient due to scarcity of resources. The time is right in Kansas to capitalize on successes, progress, and collaboration to tackle the infrastructure challenges that limit the effectiveness of the system. The Kansas ECAC will build on the strong foundation established by the KECCS Plan and the Early Learning Coordinating Council to maximize resources and institutionalize the early childhood system.

The principal and subordinate objectives of the project must be clearly stated.

Kansas has the framework in place to support a strong, coordinated system of early childhood programs and services. Since 2005, the Early Learning Coordinating Council (ELCC) has met regularly to provide leadership and guidance of the KECCS Plan. The ELCC will be designated by Governor Mark Parkinson as the State Advisory Council on Early Childhood Education and Care in Kansas. The ELCC will transform into the Kansas Early Childhood Advisory Council (ECAC) and include broad representation of early childhood leadership and stakeholders. The State Advisory Council project will support the Kansas ECAC in moving beyond the framework to address infrastructure building and systems development issues that are critical to the success of early childhood efforts in Kansas.

Kansas will continue to work toward goals and objectives of the KECCS Plan in an effort to improve the outcomes for young children. The Kansas ECAC project provides an opportunity to focus on key elements of the system for which resources would not otherwise be available at this juncture. Specifically, the Kansas ECAC will support the four following goals and related objectives as part of this project:

Goal 1: A statewide system of integrated services is available to support families with young children in Kansas.

- a) Identify opportunities for, and barriers to, collaboration and coordination among federally, state, and privately-funded programs, agencies, and organizations responsible for early childhood programs and services.
- b) Conduct periodic assessments of the early childhood coordination and collaboration activities on multiple levels; utilize the data to identify key elements and models of effective integrated service delivery.

- c) Identify methods for unified reporting among early childhood programs to show accountability for federal, state, local, and private funds.

Goal 2: Early childhood professionals will be supported in ongoing education, training, and career advancement through a coordinated professional development system.

- a) Develop a crosswalk of standards for professional development to enable portability of educational attainment that would be applicable for jobs across all early childhood settings.
- b) Identify and enhance pre-service and in-service requirements for early care and education providers.
- c) Implement a professional development registry to track and manage professional development efforts.
- d) Assess the capacity and effectiveness of the professional development system based upon the needs of the early childhood system.
- e) Develop an infrastructure that supports individual professional development along a continuum to increase the number of early childhood professionals with credentials in Kansas.

Goal 3: A coordinated, birth through 20, longitudinal data system will be available in Kansas to support both evidence-based practices and research efforts.

- a) Convene the Early Childhood Data Collection Workgroup to identify contributors and indicators that can be added to a state-level data warehouse.
- b) Develop recommendations for a long-range plan for adding data to the data warehouse to cover a majority of the state's youngest citizens, including the Results-Based Accountability indicators.

Goal 4: Early care and education providers will use the Kansas Early Learning Guidelines and Standards and evidence-based practices in program planning and service delivery to increase the number of children entering kindergarten ready to learn.

- a) Develop and provide training to early care and education providers to utilize the Kansas Early Learning Guidelines and Standards and align their curriculum and assessment with the document.
- b) Increase the number of early childhood programs that align curriculum and assessment with the Kansas Early Learning Guidelines and Standards to increase the number of children entering kindergarten ready to learn.

Any relevant data based on planning studies or needs assessments already conducted should be included or referred to in the endnotes/footnotes. In the absence of such data, describe the current status of the quality and availability of early childhood education and development programs and services for children from birth to school entry in the State; the existing need for coordination and collaboration among early childhood development programs and services for children birth to school entry in the State, as well as the existing status of State early learning standards, governance, professional development, and data systems. Incorporate demographic data and participant/beneficiary information, as needed.

Careful consideration of a variety of child, state, and systems level data provide a basis for policy and program decision-making in Kansas, and for prioritizing the enhanced infrastructure outlined in this grant application. Since 2005, the ELCC has carefully monitored gaps in the system and consistently gathered information from the end-user perspective. The Kansas ECAC will help frame further needs for infrastructure-building around the four project goals.

Goal 1: A statewide system of integrated services is available to support families with young children in Kansas. Data are collected from multiple sources to monitor the implementation and effectiveness of the early childhood system: impact of the KECCS Plan on early childhood professionals and agencies; collaboration among early childhood leadership; and, a matrix of statewide programs and services available by goal area for children birth through age five.

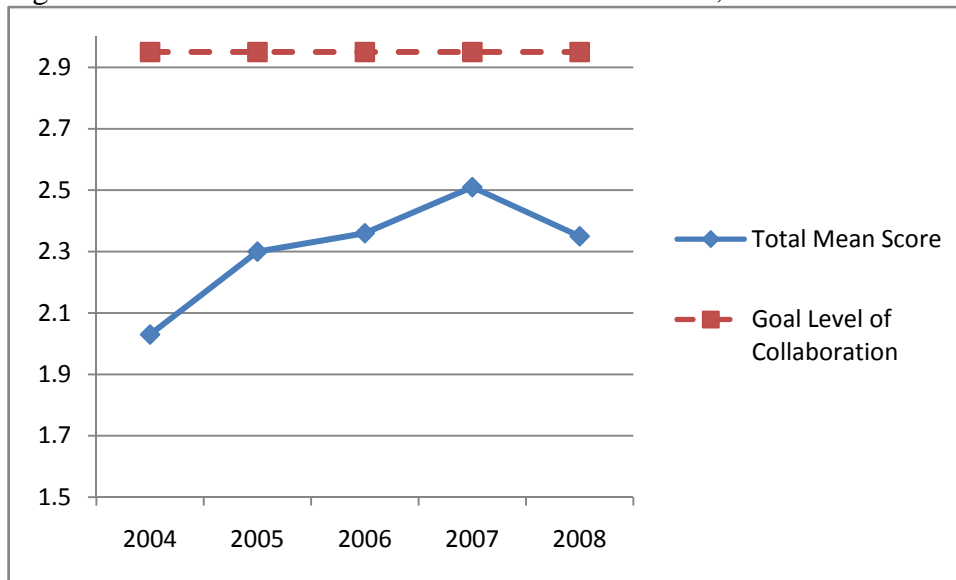
Impact. The KECCS Plan placed collaboration building as a priority since its inception. In January 2009, Plan managers conducted an online survey of KECCS stakeholders to evaluate the impact of the KECCS Plan on systems development at the state, community, and agency level. The KECCS Impact Survey was completed by 45 stakeholders, including 13 members of the ELCC. The results are clear about the influence of the Plan. More than one-third of stakeholders use the Plan regularly as a part of the planning and decision-making process at their agency, and another third use it occasionally in their work. Nearly half of the respondents indicated that the semi-annual KECCS stakeholder meetings and the available Plan graphic and folders are useful to their work. The semi-annual stakeholder meetings are reported to be a highlight of the Plan, as they provide a forum for communication and collaboration. Indeed, forty percent of stakeholders reported increases in collaboration efforts with new and existing partners on grant writing, funding, programs, and service delivery due the KECCS Plan. Nearly eighty percent of respondents said that the Plan has increased awareness about comprehensive early childhood efforts in Kansas while forty-four percent said that the Plan influences the decision-making process about policies, programs, and services.

Results of the KECCS Impact Survey also show that new partnerships led to increased funding through grant-writing and collaborations with other stakeholders, more effective

approaches to service delivery, and increased collaboration to generate new ideas, share resources, and coordinate to prevent duplication and advance agency and state goals. Four-fifths of survey respondents agreed that the KECCS Plan provides an effective framework that both unifies early childhood efforts across the state, and guides planning, policy development and implementation. As one stakeholder put it, “The KECCS Plan is the foundation for every conversation about early childhood in Kansas.”

Collaboration. Additionally, the *Levels of Collaboration Scale* (Frey, Lohmeier, Lee, and Tollefson, 2006) has been administered to each ELCC member annually, and is designed to indicate the level at which they collaborate with other grant partner agencies and groups. Baseline data indicated that the “goal” level of collaboration between grant partners was 2.95, near the 3 level, *coordination*, which is defined as sharing information, resources, and decision-making, as well as maintaining defined roles and communicating frequently. Collaboration scores consistently increased since originally collected in 2004. While the collaboration score of 2.35 in 2008 is a slight drop from previous growth in collaboration, scores remained fairly steady. For 2008, evaluators also looked at a subscale score for agencies participating in the Kansas Early Learning Collaborative (KELC), a core group of early childhood programs that are coordinating services and funds through the Kansas Early Childhood Block Grant; the KELC agencies’ Collaboration Scale score was 2.78, which is another example of the progress toward increased coordination. Collaboration over time is illustrated in Figure 3.

Figure 3. KECCS Levels of Collaboration Scale Scores, 2004 to 2008.



Note. For 2004, n=15; 2005, n=15; 2006, n=17; 2007, n=20; 2008, n=12.

Matrix. As part of ongoing evaluation efforts, a matrix is maintained and updated regularly to reflect the availability and capacity of statewide programs that support the KECCS goals. The matrix is used to identify gaps in services and issues of capacity and uptake in service delivery across the state. The Fiscal Year 2007 Matrix is included in Appendix X.

The analysis of school readiness data, the KECCS environmental scan, and the matrix, coupled with the input of those actually delivering services, identify several gaps that have been the focus of the KECCS goals and objectives:

Health insurance and medical homes. 1. Over 71,000 children in Kansas (under 19 years of age) are uninsured (KHI, 2009). 2. Insufficient numbers of Medicaid providers. As the message from the oral health initiative takes hold with the public, there are also an inadequate number of dentists who accept Medicaid.

Mental health and social-emotional development. 1. Although progress has been made, mental health and providers of mental health services are not adequately integrated into the early childhood system in Kansas. 2. The inclusion of mental health in professional development

initiatives is minimal. 3. Early childhood needs to be promoted in mental health curricula at institutions of higher education.

Early care and education services. 1. While quality standards exist, there is not a coordinated mechanism for determining “quality” of programs. 2. There is a disconnect between K-12 and early childhood education. 3. Funding is lacking to support all-day Kindergarten and Pre-K programs. 4. Quality infant/toddler slots are lacking. 5. More professional development, training, and education are needed for early childhood educators. 6. Wages for early childhood educators are insufficient to retain highly qualified educators.

Parent education. 1. Involving parents in decision-making at the organizational level is difficult. 2. Parent education programs have not been evaluated sufficiently. 3. Parents are unaware of their early childhood education options. 4. Non-English speaking and at-risk populations are difficult to reach and connect with services. 5. Public awareness campaigns are not coordinated.

Family supports. 1. Eligible families are not accessing available services/programs. 2. Home visitation programs cannot meet the demand to provide supports and services to families with young children.

Goal 2: Early childhood professionals will be supported in ongoing education, training, and career advancement through a coordinated professional development system. *Kansas Professional Development Survey.* During the spring of 2008, the Institute for Educational Research and Public Service at the University of Kansas conducted a survey of agencies and individuals that provide professional development activities to early care and education professionals in the State of Kansas as part of the Child Care Development Fund and the Kansas Early Childhood Comprehensive Systems Plan. The survey was an initial attempt to collect

information, and an indication that further work is needed to understand the delivery of professional development across the State. While the survey is not comprehensive in terms of respondents and question content, it represents a snapshot of professional development activities across the State. Forty-five respondents completed the survey. Results indicate the following about the current status of professional development in Kansas:

Qualifications. Minimum qualifications for professional development providers vary significantly. Approximately 50% of respondents indicated that they require a bachelor's degree while 20% required a master's degree. Approximately 30% of respondents required one to three years of experience in the field while 25% required five or more years of experience. The majority of respondents required some type of experience that did not fit into the categories provided, such as previous teaching experience. While most respondents indicated that they have minimum requirements for professional development providers, there is not consistency in these expectations. The substantial endorsement of the "Other" response to these questions requires a closer look at universal or consistent categories for education and experience of professional development providers.

Formats and content. Professional development activities are available in a variety of formats. Respondents reported offering approximately 1,985 activities in a variety of formats. The three most common formats were: one-time in-person group training, multi-session in-person group training, and one-time individual training at worksite.

Training content is determined through a variety of sources. The three most commonly reported influences for determining content were: 1. Verbal input from the field; 2. Survey of providers' self-reported needs; and, 3. Federal/state requirements or mandates. The three most commonly reported influences for determining format, including location, method, etc., were: 1.

Need or interest of child care providers; 2. Availability of space; and, 3. Geography, i.e. to meet needs of providers in sparsely populated areas.

A range of topic areas are covered in professional development offerings.

The three most common topic areas for professional development activities are: 1. Health, Safety, and Nutrition; 2. Child Development; and, 3. Interactions with Children. Other areas that are commonly discussed as important components of high quality early care and education programs (e.g. Classroom Environment, Family & Community Partnerships, Curriculum Content focused on academic skill development) were the least frequently covered topic areas for professional development activities. While it is understandable that the most frequently covered topics are driven by licensing requirements, consideration might be given to ways to increase the availability of training on high quality program components.

Certification. Credits, clock hours, continuing education units, and other types of participant benefits differed. Providers are often driven to choose professional development opportunities to meet licensing or accreditation requirements. Approximately 50% of respondents offer KDHE approved clock hours (non-credit) to participants. Approximately 35% offer credit hours (higher education) or clock hours (non-credit) not submitted to and/or approved by KDHE.

Outreach. A variety of strategies are used to advertise professional development activities. The three most common methods reported for advertising professional development were: 1. E-mail distribution; 2. Word of mouth; and, 3. Newsletters. Responses indicate that not all agencies are using universally available, coordinated advertising or notification options. It may be beneficial to explore increased coordination of outreach efforts related to professional development activities.

Geography. Many professional development activities are offered statewide, however there are gaps. Nearly 50% of respondents indicated that they offer professional development activities statewide. There are large areas of the State where no specific activities (beyond activities that are offered statewide) are offered. The largest areas without county-specific professional development are the southwest and north-central regions. The counties that do not have additional activities beyond activities that are available statewide tend to be clustered together. This cluster results in large areas of the State that may lack adequate access to professional development opportunities.

Funding. Funding and costs for professional development activities vary. The three most common sources of funding for professional development activities were: 1. Grant funding – State; 2. Participant fees; and, 3. Absorbed by overall agency budget. Forty percent of respondents indicated that there was no cost to participants to attend their professional development activities. Similarly, over 50% of respondents reported that they do not provide financial support to participants to attend. Exploration of other grant funding, braiding and blending funding, or other financial support may be useful to future work.

Evaluation and assessment. Evaluation and assessment of professional development activities focus primarily on satisfaction. Over 80% of respondents use participant satisfaction surveys to evaluate or assess professional development activities. Over 60% use successful completion of a task or project and nearly 40% use a pre/post test (knowledge of content) to evaluate or assess activities. The three most commonly reported uses of evaluation or assessment results are: 1. Future planning; 2. Format changes; and, 3. Follow-up with participants. The most common method cited for evaluating professional development activities was participant satisfaction surveys. As funding sources require increased accountability and demonstrated

outcomes, it is important to consider adding alternative types of evaluation that address these requirements and show the effectiveness of professional development activities. While many respondents provided an answer to the question about long-term results and proven outcomes of their professional development activities, almost none of the responses reflected actual outcomes. Education may be needed about expectations related to results and outcomes, and resources are needed to facilitate implementation of improved outcome measures.

Goal 3: A coordinated, birth through 20, longitudinal data system will be available in Kansas to support both evidence-based practices and research efforts. Kansas was one of seventeen states to participate in the original School Readiness Project. Partners identified 54 indicators that encompassed the whole child that were used to track school readiness in the State. These indicators served as the basis for initial data collection for the KECCS Plan, which has evolved to the point where a multi-level data collection system, such as a longitudinal data system, is appropriate and necessary for the work in Kansas.

KSDE study. In 2003, a study explored the predictive value of county-level measures of community, family, and school influences on student readiness to obtain empirical support for the theoretical model of school readiness developed by the Task Force (Bovaird, 2004). The study used a variety of indicators that encompassed both student-level and county-level data. In 2003, pilot student-level data were collected via the Kansas School Entry Assessment Pilot Project Collection instrument (KSEA). After determining the need for a more broad-based and nationally normalized assessment instrument, KSDE staff decided to use a new child assessment published by Riverside Publishing. It was a teacher observation instrument, developmentally appropriate for the age of the children being assessed. The instrument, the Qualls Early Learning Inventory (QELI), was shared with the group of Kansas early childhood experts. Kansas experts

chose to add three domains that were not a part of the QELI – social emotional development; physical health development; and, symbolic development. Kansas experts felt these were critical domains for school readiness.

The Kansas Early Learning Inventory (KELI) was used from 2005 through 2008 for kindergarten data collection. In 2006, a KELI-4 (using the QELI for fours and the three additional domains that were developed by Kansas early childhood experts for the four year old instrument) was used for the first time in Four Year Old At-Risk classrooms.

KELI Results. As part of the School Readiness Project, kindergarten teachers provided data to KSDE for three years: 2005-2008. The Kansas Early Learning Inventory (KELI) is an observational measure that rates children’s skills and knowledge on a scale of 0 to 3. The KELI covers nine domains: attentive behavior, general knowledge, math concepts, oral communication, symbolic development, physical development, social emotional development, work habits, and written language. Teachers provided data on children’s entry and exiting skills in their classes and classroom practices (the Kindergarten Teacher Practices survey). A self-report measure is also collected from parents on home practices. Results over the past three years (2005-08), which included kindergarten children that were aligned with the general population (gender, percentages of IEP’s children, etc.), indicated that:

Children are entering kindergarten with good oral language skills, and scores show children have adequate social skills.

All domains of learning showed improved scores across the kindergarten year. However, children who are considered ‘at-risk’ (low income, English Language Learners, and students with Individual Education Plans) do not have as high a level of skill in all domains.

Overall, written language was the lowest area of skill. Supportive home practices, such as reading to the child every day, supported higher literacy scores (2005-08) and led to higher scores on all academic achievement areas (2007-08). Children who attended preschool for a greater number of years prior to kindergarten scored higher on many of the more academic areas but were lower in Attentive Behavior (2007-08). (Yet, a significant proportion of parents have a difficult time finding quality child care.) Finally, children in full-day kindergarten classrooms attained higher spring scores in academic areas than their peers who attended half-day kindergarten.

Kindergarten Assessment Initiative. In 2007-2008, the Kansas Health Foundation, a long-time partner and leader on the KECCS Plan, invested over half a million dollars to evaluate school readiness in the State. The Kansas Kindergarten Assessment Initiative study, which was conducted by the Kansas Health Institute, the University of Kansas, and the Kansas State Department of Education, provided a comprehensive assessment of school readiness. Assessors conducted direct child assessments on a random sample of 2,666 children during the first weeks of kindergarten. The sample was representative of all Kansas kindergartners, including children from 54 counties and 110 elementary schools in 73 school districts. The study showed that early learning programs make a difference: children who participated in an early learning program before starting kindergarten did better on all academic assessments than children who did not participate in early learning programs. Overall, 82 percent of children have the academic and social skills they need at kindergarten entry. However, the study showed there is still important work to be done: only 44 percent of the most vulnerable children in the State (low-income, English Language Learners, special education needs) have the overall skills they need to do well in school. (See Appendix X for the complete KHI Research Brief.)

Goal 4: Early care and education providers will use the Kansas Early Learning Guidelines and Standards, and evidence-based practices in program planning and service delivery to increase the number of children entering kindergarten ready to learn. The Kansas Early Learning Document, which includes both Early Learning Guidelines and Early Learning Standards, was developed by Steering and Development Committees, co-facilitated by SRS and KSDE, and comprised of approximately 35 early childhood experts from across Kansas as well as national content experts. The Document was initially released in 2006 and was made available online (<http://www.ksde.org/>) and in paper format for stakeholders. Training on the document began in the summer of 2007 for all interested early childhood educators, providers, and administrators: Pre-Kindergarten, preschool, early childhood special education, Head Start and Early Head Start, Parents As Teachers, and child care. A train-the-trainer session with the Kansas Association of Child Care Resource and Referral Agencies (KACCRRRA) was conducted in September of 2007. Other presentations during early childhood conferences (KAEYC, KDEC) continued the professional development on the contents and use of the document. The Kansas State Department of Education and their partners conducted numerous trainings for the State on the Document and its use since its release. No data on attendance, satisfaction, or results were collected on the trainings to date. The Kansas ECAC project plans to track distribution and utilization as implementation of the Early Learning Document is further explored.

Additionally, complementary “How to Use” sections of the Document were completed in 2009 to help facilitate early care and education providers across the State use of the Early Learning Guidelines in their daily routines and activities in the home or classroom. Trainings were conducted throughout 2009 on the current revision. All were evaluated as part of conference sessions, not individually.

All early childhood faculty at two year community colleges and four year universities have access to the Kansas Early Learning Document. Most, if not all faculty incorporate the Standards in their coursework—many requiring that students use the Standards as they develop lesson plans and other project work. The developers of the Early Learning Standards aligned with national early childhood curricula

(b) Approach

Outline a plan of action that describes the scope and detail of how the proposed work will be accomplished. Account for all functions or activities identified in the application.

This section describes the approach to accomplishing each of the four Kansas ECAC goals. A detailed management plan describes the activities that will support each goal area, and can be found on page 43.

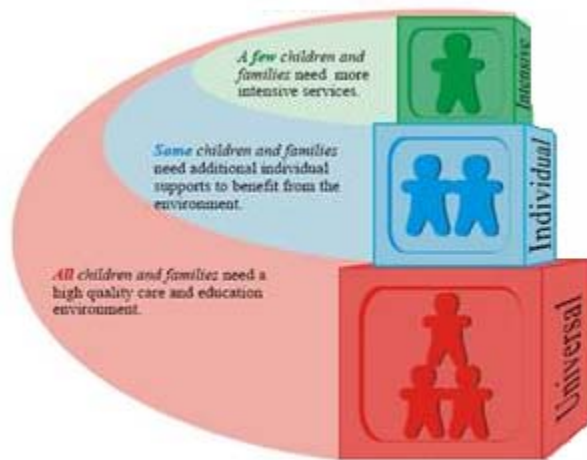
Goal 1: A statewide system of integrated services is available to support families with young children in Kansas. The KECCS Plan has created a forum for integrating services in communities and across disciplines that has had a positive impact on service-delivery in Kansas. The universal approach has allowed buy-in from a broad group of stakeholders, and has resulted in increased funding, streamlined service delivery, and better communication in support of families with young children. The Kansas ECAC project will build on these efforts to support further integration of services at both the state and community levels. In addition to service integration, the project will explore blended funding and outcomes across the State to maximize resources and to identify common data sources to measure progress. An initial inventory of common assessments across programs will provide a basis for discussion. Particular attention will be paid to replicable policies and procedures related to an integrated system – including

service-delivery, funding, and outcomes – in order to ensure dissemination across Kansas and nationally.

The need to find ways of supporting Kansas’ most at-risk children and families continues to grow. For example, there are 15 Kansas Early Head Start (KEHS) programs that enroll 1,249 children and families in 50 of 105 counties, representing less than 7% of eligible children across the state. Programs maintain a waiting list of over 500 families, and many children “age out” of KEHS services before there is an available slot for them (KEHS, 2009). The percentage of children under age 18 living in poverty in Kansas increased from 12% in 2000 to 15% in 2007 (Kids Count, 2008). In addition, the percent of children living in families where no parent has full-time employment also increased from 22% in 2000 to 27% in 2007 (Kids Count, 2008). Infant mortality, low-birth-weight, and the number of children placed in out-of-home care have all increased from 2000 to the present (Kids Count, 2008; SRS, 2009).

In response to data identifying at-risk and underserved children as particularly in need of effective and quality services, the Kansas ECAC will continue to promote the use of evidence-based practices while exploring a risk model that would direct resources appropriately to all families. All families with young children need some level of support; some families need additional supports to ensure that their children enter school ready to learn. A risk model will help policymakers and early childhood leadership make decisions that reflect the pyramid of needs in the State. (See Figure 4 for a graphic of the risk pyramid.) Pennsylvania’s experience with developing and implementing a risk model will be used to inform the Kansas ECAC efforts.

Figure 4. Risk pyramid.



Source: Adapted from The Oregon Model for Supporting Young Children’s Social and Emotional Development in Early Childhood Care and Education Settings.

Goal 2: Early childhood professionals will be supported in ongoing education, training, and

career advancement through a coordinated professional development system. A planning

group, comprised of over 60 stakeholders from state and local agencies, child care centers and

family homes, and higher education, has initiated work with the National Child Care Information

and Technical Assistance Center (NCCIC) specialist to develop a Professional Development

Strategic Plan that will function as a roadmap for professional development activities in the

State. The work has been stalled in large part due to lack of resources in State agencies to staff

the effort, so formalized support for professional development planning will be a priority of the

Kansas ECAC project. Dedicated resources will be directed at the planning process to build

collaboration, address challenges, and move the work forward over the next 12-18 months.

The professional development survey, described earlier, was conducted to provide background information on the current status of early childhood professional development and to inform future planning. The survey was particularly useful in identifying gaps and recognizing strengths of the current system. In addition, a status document, or environmental scan, of

professional development activities was completed. Like the survey, the status document identified gaps including qualifications and communication, which will be addressed as part of this project. The professional development work is grounded in the Kansas Early Learning Document Guiding Principles, and spans early childhood professionals across disciplines on a continuum.

The planning group made initial recommendations of a mission, vision, and priority areas that could be used as the basis for ongoing discussion and planning. The mission is to establish an integrated statewide professional development system for the early childhood workforce to achieve high quality care and education for all Kansas children. The vision is to build an effective professional development system that prepares, supports, and recognizes the early childhood workforce and facilitates high quality programs for all young children and their families in Kansas. The following elements will be included in systems planning: a common core of knowledge, competencies, and assessment criteria; standardization of professional requirements, training, and position titles; an individual credentialing system for all practitioners; coordination of training resources so that training is on-going and progressive and available to everyone in the early childhood workforce; articulated curriculum across educational settings throughout Kansas; adequate funding for education and training; a framework for compensation commensurate with the level of professional education and training; quality early care and education programs for all children and families; a working guide for individuals, professional organizations, agencies, institutions, policymakers, and communities to use in planning, delivering, and supporting professional growth activities for the early childhood workforce; and links between early childhood, school age, and youth development professionals.

Goal 3: A coordinated, birth through 20, longitudinal data system will be available in Kansas to support both evidence-based practices and research efforts. The Kansas State Department of Education (KSDE) has received two U.S. Department of Education Institute for Education Sciences (IES) Longitudinal Data System (LDS) grants to ensure that education data are effectively collected, managed, and used; and that K-12 data can be linked to postsecondary data. KSDE also received funding from the Kansas Legislature to establish a data warehouse for K-12 data. With the help of funding from IES and the Kansas Legislature, Kansas is a leader in such things as data governance and data quality initiatives, both critical when data are used to set policy, evaluate schools and programs, and conduct research.

Recent priorities at the USDE identify the inclusion of early childhood data as the next step for longitudinal data systems with a third competition for LDS, which began in summer 2009. As a result, the ECAC stimulus funding and the LDS competition provide the State with an opportunity to develop a plan to add early childhood outcomes to the data warehouse. In order to maximize the value of quality longitudinal education data in Kansas, the Kansas Educational Data Users Consortium (KEDUC), was formed in January 2008.

Primarily, three committees completed the work: Research Agenda, Professional Development, and Communications. The Charter Members of KEDUC are the Kansas State Department of Education; Kansas State Board of Regents; Kansas State University; and the University of Kansas. The Affiliate Members are Emporia State University; Fort Hays State University; Pittsburg State University; Wichita State University; Kansas Association of School Boards; Kansas Action for Children; Kansas Association of School Administrators; Kansas Association for Supervision and Curriculum Development; Kansas Staff Development Council; and Kansas Association for Secondary School Principals.

KEDUC has created a system for de-identified student assessment data that will be available to approved users in data marts, built from data in the data warehouse. In addition to data for all students, student assessment data are already available for each of the state assessments using the following variables:

- Socioeconomic status designation (full price, reduced price, free lunch)
- Disability designation (disability/no disability)
- English language learner designation (ELL/not ELL)
- Race/ethnicity
- Gender

The Kansas State Assessment data begins at grade three. While the scope of a statewide K-12 LDS includes nearly all students in that age range, there is no single early childhood system that collects data for the majority of preschool children. While there are grade-level standards, state assessments, state definitions and timelines for state data collections, and district-selected student information systems capable of sending district data to the state accurately and in the correct format, there is not the same level of conformity at the preschool level. Currently, Pre-K measures are collected by various programs and different early childhood programs reports to different agencies. However, these measures are not universal and are not included in the data warehouse. Differing state agencies, standards, evaluation tools, data management systems, and funding sources across programs are challenges that need to be addressed to develop a unified data collection system.

Preparatory work to develop informed recommendations could be accomplished through the ECAC funding and the formation of an Early Childhood Data Collection Workgroup, a

subset of ECAC members. In addition, The Data Collection efforts will be led by staff from the Institute, in collaboration with the KECCS Plan and the LDS.

Goal 4: Early care and education providers will use the Kansas Early Learning Guidelines and Standards and evidence-based practices in program planning and service delivery to

increase the number of children entering kindergarten ready to learn. The overall purpose of the Kansas Early Learning Document is to provide a general overview of the skills, knowledge, and abilities in all developmental areas (e.g., social-emotional, physical, communication and early literacy, cognitive) so that all young children can enter school ready to learn. The Document is a tool to help achieve school readiness goals. The Early Learning Guidelines section specifically focuses on early childhood providers to help them make connections for parents around their children’s school readiness and success. The Standards section is presented in a format similar to the K-12 content standards along with benchmarks and indicators, and is an extension of the developmental domains and foundational skills described in the Guidelines section of the document. The Kansas Early Learning Standards are closely linked with the Kansas State Department of Education’s K-12 content standards promoting continuity between early childhood and primary grade (K-3rd) programs.

KSDE will explore the possibility of providing additional training on “How To” sections of the Document to provide information on developmentally appropriate practices, learning through play, and how to align a selected curriculum with the Kansas Early Learning Standards.

The Kansas ECAC will provide a forum for supporting intentional implementation of the Early Learning Document in a variety of early learning settings. Early care and education providers will receive training and technical assistance to implement the Document into their

work with children. The focus of implementation will be across settings, including preschools, center-based care, and family homes.

Additionally, partners will explore a parent-friendly format for the Early Learning Standards. Initial feedback on the Standards suggests that parents do not know how to utilize the information. Work with Kansas Parent Information Resource Center (KPIRC) and parent representatives will help to reformat the document to provide parents with additional resources while supporting communication and understanding between parents, early care, and education providers.

Finally, now that the Document is complete and early childhood settings are integrating it into their work, there is a need for a mechanism to evaluate the impact and effectiveness of the Document as a provider tool. A workgroup, convened by KSDE, will identify an evaluation framework and conduct an evaluation of the implementation of the Early Learning Document. *Cite factors that might accelerate or decelerate the work and state your reason for taking the proposed approach rather than others.*

There are four primary challenges that could decelerate the work in Kansas: (1) funding, (2) vacancy rates and budget cuts, (3) barriers to collaboration, (4) data, and (5) gubernatorial changes.

Funding. Early childhood advocates in Kansas were successful in securing funding to support early childhood programs and services. The allocation of Children's Initiative Funds and creation of the Early Childhood Block Grant significantly increased the capacity of the early childhood community to deliver high quality services to children and families. Current fiscal realities, however, threaten continued support for programs and services that support the KECCS

Plan. The Kansas Coalition for School Readiness and the Early Learning Advocacy Council lead a coordinated advocacy plan during the current legislative session and in the future.

Vacancy rates and budget cuts. Key state agencies in Kansas, including the Kansas Department of Social and Rehabilitation Services and the Kansas Department of Health and Environment, are operating short-staffed for over a year as the State implemented a hiring freeze due to budget constraints. (Currently, for example, KDHE has nearly 15% vacancies. SRS has overall vacancies of 18%, while the division that works in early childhood has vacancies of nearly 30%). Cuts to state budgets forced agencies to make difficult decisions about staffing, programs, and service delivery directly impact children, families, and communities. At the local level, there are similar challenges that add another layer onto an already difficult work process. Funds from the American Reinvestment and Recovery Act had a positive impact, but a backlog of work will make the process slow.

Barriers to collaboration. Significant progress has been made in building collaborative relationships at both the state and local levels to support early childhood programs and services, yet there is more work to be done. For example, simplifying paperwork (applications, reports, etc) at the state level would reduce the administrative strain on local programs. Coordination at the state level to accomplish this, however, is complicated by federal, state, and agency requirements, as well as the overlap within state agencies of early childhood, and non-early childhood programs and staff with different goals and priorities. Building on the strong, existing collaboration among state partners to address these issues will allow for practical guidance and support for local needs.

Data. An abundance of data about children and families in Kansas are collected on a regular basis by state and local agencies, and programs. There is a need to better coordinate and

utilize the data to make decisions and effect change at the state and local levels. While the Results Based Accountability process and early discussions on the LDS produced progress, there remain challenges to making effective use of the data that are available.

Gubernatorial changes. In addition to changes in early childhood leadership, Kansas experienced and is anticipating significant changes at the gubernatorial level. Former Governor Kathleen Sebelius left in early 2009 to join President Obama's Cabinet, and was succeeded by Mark Parkinson who previously served as Lieutenant Governor. Governor Parkinson indicated he will not run for Governor in 2010. As a result, Kansas will be in transition yet again. Despite a strong early childhood framework, this type of change can impact progress, and the carefully planned approach that will be used as part of the ECAC will help to address any challenges as a result of the changes.

Proposed approach. The ECAC grant is an opportunity for early childhood leadership and stakeholders in Kansas to build on existing efforts and further the work of the KECCS Plan. By utilizing an existing, familiar, and successful Plan as the basis for the ECAC, there is a precedent for buy-in. The approach also maximizes efforts to build a comprehensive, coordinated system of services and programs to support young children and their families statewide. Most importantly, the ECAC will move toward institutionalizing the Plan so that the structure and supports for early childhood in Kansas will outlive the current set of leaders.

Describe any unusual features of the project such as design or technological innovations, reductions in cost or time, or extraordinary social and community involvement.

The KECCS Plan has provided a framework for both early childhood stakeholders and policymakers over the past five years. The Plan offers a visual for understanding the complexities of the early childhood system. For years, early childhood suffered from an identity

crisis – services occurred in a variety of settings and were delivered via different formats. While everyone shared a common early childhood experience, the experience of receiving services is not as uniform as in the K-12 experience. The Plan filled this gap by showing connections between seemingly unconnected programs and services to create a systematic view of early childhood that happens in a variety of settings, rather than in one school building. The visual helped early childhood stakeholders and policymakers alike to expand their understanding of the structure of early childhood in the State. The KECCS Plan will continue to provide the guidance for partnerships, collaboration and decision-making, and will be closely linked to the work conducted as part of the Kansas ECAC project.

As part of early childhood strategic planning, technology has been used to facilitate communication and to build momentum from early on. By continuing to integrate technological resources to support the early childhood efforts, continued momentum has been sustained.

The Longitudinal Data System elements of the Kansas ECAC involve a unique partnership with the Department of Education grant awarded to the Kansas State Department of Education. The partnership strengthens both early childhood and K-12 data collection efforts by broadening the system and adding a lifespan component to LDS data warehouse.

Provide the name and agency affiliation of each member or proposed member of the State Advisory Council. If applicable, explain fully why membership on the State Advisory Council is not consistent with the requirements of The Head Start Act, Section 642B (b)(1)(C).

The ELCC includes a broad representation of early childhood leadership in Kansas, including state agencies, not-for-profit organizations, and advocacy groups working across the KECCS goal areas (health, mental health and social-emotional development, early care and

education, parent education, and family supports). ELCC membership reflects the requirements of the Head Start Act, as well as the needs of the State. Table 2 lists current ELCC membership.

Table 2. ECAC Membership.

ECAC Requirement
A representative from Head Start agencies located in the State, including migrant and seasonal Head Start programs and Indian Head Start programs
A representative of the State agency responsible for child care
A representative of the State agency responsible for programs under section 619 or part C of the Individuals with Disabilities Act
A representative of local providers of early childhood education and development services
The State Director of Head Start Collaboration
A representative of the State agency responsible for health or mental health care
A representative of institutions of higher education in the State
A representative of the State educational agency
A representative of local educational agencies
Representatives of other entities determined relevant by the Governor

Address each of the three years of the grant period and describe goals, objectives, activities and timelines for accomplishing each responsibility of the State Advisory Council.

Provide quantitative monthly or quarterly projections of the accomplishments to be achieved for each function or activity in such terms as the number of people to be served and the number of activities accomplished. When accomplishments cannot be quantified by activity or function, list them in chronological order to show the schedule of accomplishments and their target dates.

The following management plan table (Table 3) outlines the activities, timelines, and milestones for each of the goals and objectives of the Kansas ECAC project.

Table 3: Kansas ECAC Management Plan.

Goal 1: A statewide system of integrated services is available to support families with young children in Kansas.			
Objective 1A: Identify opportunities for, and barriers to, collaboration and coordination among federally, state, and privately-funded programs, agencies, and organizations responsible for early childhood programs and services.			
Activities	Timeline	Milestones	Person(s) Responsible
Convene a workgroup to identify local examples of effective collaborations.	Year 1	Workgroup meetings; identified collaborations	ECAC Coordinator
Disseminate lessons learned and provide technical assistance to targeted communities.	Year 2	Technical assistance provided	ECAC Coordinator
Explore additional opportunities for blending and braiding funding and services.	Years 2-5	Collaboration scale scores	ECAC Coordinator; ECAC; Stakeholders
Work with funders to align RFPs with KECCS goals and objectives.	Years 1-5	Number of RFPs aligned with KECCS goals	ECAC Coordinator; ECAC; Funders
Objective 1B: Conduct periodic assessments of the early childhood coordination and collaboration activities on multiple levels; utilize the data to identify key elements and models of effective integrated service delivery.			
Activities	Timeline	Milestones	Person(s) Responsible
Complete state-level collaboration measurement.	Annually	Collaboration scale scores	ECAC Coordinator; KECCS Coordinator; ECAC
Provide opportunities for state-level networking, collaboration, and coordination.	Bi-annually	Stakeholder meetings Webinars	ECAC Coordinator; KECCS Coordinator
Update matrix of statewide programs.	Annually	Updated matrix	ECAC Coordinator; KECCS Coordinator
Update converging systems diagram to reflect statewide early childhood programs.	Annually	Updated systems diagram	ECAC Coordinator; KECCS Coordinator
Revisit KECCS goals and objectives based on gaps identified in matrix and by stakeholders.	Every two years	Plan revisions	KECCS Coordinator; ECAC Coordinator; ECAC
Objective 1C: Identify methods for unified reporting among early childhood programs to show accountability for federal, state, local, and private funds.			
Activities	Timeline	Milestones	Person(s) Responsible
Conduct an inventory of measures across Kansas early childhood programs to identify common outcomes across programs.	Year 1	Inventory completed	ECAC Coordinator; Data Coordinator; Workgroup

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Develop recommendations for unified reporting.	Year 1	Recommendations made	ECAC Coordinator; Data Coordinator; Workgroup; ECAC
Goal 2: Early childhood professionals will be supported in ongoing education, training, and career advancement through a coordinated professional development system.			
Objective 2A: Develop a crosswalk of standards for professional development to enable portability of educational attainment that would be applicable for jobs across all early childhood settings.			
Activities	Timeline	Milestones	Person(s) Responsible
Reconvene professional development planning group.	Year 1	Group meetings	PD Coordinator; Young Child Wellness Expert; SRS
Identify standards to be included in crosswalk.	Year 1	List of standards	Workgroup
Prepare draft of crosswalk for workgroup's review.	Year 1	Crosswalk completed	PD Coordinator; Wellness Expert
Utilize crosswalk for professional development planning.	Years 2-5	Professional development plan; training schedule	Workgroup; PD Coordinator; Wellness Expert
Objective 2B: Identify and enhance pre-service and in-service requirements for early care and education providers.			
Activities	Timeline	Milestones	Person(s) Responsible
Complete BEST Team work to identify recommendations for pre-service and in-service requirements.	Year 1	BEST Team recommendations made	KDHE
Implement and support requirements as recommended by BEST Team.	Years 2-5	Changes in regulations and licensing requirements	ECAC, KDHE, PD Workgroup, PD Coordinator, Wellness Expert
Objective 2C: Implement a professional development registry to track and manage professional development efforts.			
Activities	Timeline	Milestones	Person(s) Responsible
Identify a registry that will be used and supported statewide.	Year 1	Registry identified	KDHE, ECAC, PD Workgroup
Develop policies and procedures for data collection, tracking, and use.	Year 1	Policies and procedures completed	KDHE, PD Coordinator, PD Workgroup
Develop memoranda of understanding among relevant partner agencies. (PD providers, licensing agency, SRS, etc)	Year 1	MOU completed and signed	KDHE, PD Coordinator, PD Workgroup

Begin data collection.	Year 2	Data collected	KDHE, PD Stakeholders
Objective 2D: Assess the capacity and effectiveness of the professional development system based upon the needs of the early childhood system.			
Activities	Timeline	Milestones	Person(s) Responsible
Utilize KECCS matrix and professional development survey results to identify priority areas for professional development.	Year 1	Priority areas identified	Workgroup; PD Coordinator; Wellness Expert
Identify gaps in trainings needed to advance providers on their career continuum.	Ongoing, years 2-5	Gaps identified	Workgroup; PD Coordinator; Wellness Expert
Objective 2E: Develop an infrastructure that supports individual professional development along a continuum to increase the number of early childhood professionals with credentials in Kansas.			
Activities	Timeline	Milestones	Person(s) Responsible
Identify career progression trends for early childhood professionals.	Year 1	Career advancement framework completed	PD Coordinator; PD Workgroup
Develop articulation agreements between community colleges and universities to support career and educational growth.	Years 2-3	Participation of Board of Regents; articulation agreements	PD Coordinator; Wellness Expert; ECAC
Goal 3: A coordinated, birth through 20, longitudinal data system will be available in Kansas to support both evidence-based practices and research efforts.			
Objective 3A: Convene the Early Childhood Data Collection Workgroup to identify contributors and indicators that can be added to a state-level data warehouse.			
Activities	Timeline	Milestones	Person(s) Responsible
Convene the Early Childhood Data Collection Workgroup to identify potential contributors to the KSDE data warehouse.	Year 1	Workgroup meetings held	Data Coordinator
Identify indicators that can be tracked as the child progresses through the system, the source of those indicators, as well as parameters for inclusion.	Year 1	Indicator list	LDS Workgroup; Data Coordinator
Discuss and determine common tools to be used across programs to assess student accomplishment of the cross-walked standards (based on inventory in Goal 1).	Year 2	Common tools identified; agreements across programs made	LDS Workgroup; Data Coordinator; ECAC

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Include assessment data, by standard, in the data warehouse, similar to the system that exists for K-12.	Years 2-3	Data collected and stored	Data Coordinator
Objective 3B: Develop recommendations for a long-range plan for adding data to the data warehouse to cover a majority of the state’s youngest citizens, including the Results-Based Accountability indicators.			
Activities	Timeline	Milestones	Person(s) Responsible
Develop recommendations for a long-range plan for adding data to cover a majority of the state’s youngest citizens. A phased in plan could include KSDE-funded programs, Early Head Start, Head Start, Infants and Toddlers, and other state-funded programs.	Year 1	Long range plan completed	LDS Workgroup; Data Coordinator
Provide recommendations to KSDE LDS group for adding early childhood program data to the LDS warehouse.	Year 1	Recommendations on early childhood data collection	LDS Workgroup; Data Coordinator
Goal 4: Early care and education providers will use the Kansas Early Learning Guidelines and Standards and evidence-based practices in program planning and service delivery to increase the number of children entering kindergarten ready to learn.			
Objective 4A: Develop and provide training to early care and education providers to utilize the Kansas Early Learning Guidelines and Standards and align their curriculum and assessment with the document.			
Activities	Timeline	Milestones	Person(s) Responsible
Explore hands-on training opportunities for early care and education providers using the “How To” sections.	Year 1	Training plan developed	ECAC Coordinator; KSDE; Stakeholders
Provide training to child care providers.	Ongoing, years 1-5	Training completed; training evaluated	KSDE; Stakeholders
Develop parent-friendly version of the document to distribute to parents.	Year 1	Parent materials completed and distributed	KPIRC, ECAC Coordinator
Objective 4B: Increase the number of early childhood programs that align curriculum and assessment with the Kansas Early Learning Guidelines and Standards to increase the number of children entering kindergarten ready to learn.			
Activities	Timeline	Milestones	Person(s) Responsible
Ensure alignment of the Kansas Preschool Program and 4 year-old at-risk programs’ curriculum and assessments with the Kansas	Year 1	Curriculum alignment	KSDE

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Early Learning Standards.			
Develop an evaluation mechanism to measure and monitor use and effectiveness of the Early Learning Document.	Year 2	Evaluation tool developed or identified	KSDE

Provide a plan for conducting the required periodic needs assessment, for holding public hearings to provide opportunities for public input in the activities of the State advisory Council, and for holding State Advisory Council meetings for each year of the three-year grant period. Meetings are required for review of implementation status, updating the implementation plan and other reasons deemed necessary by the State Advisory Council.

Periodic needs assessment. The Kansas ECAC Project Coordinator will provide the staff support to conduct and update needs assessments for the early childhood system in partnership with the ECAC and with KECCS project management staff.

Public input. To ensure broader, regular input beyond the membership of the Kansas ECAC, a new communication structure will be developed that will include bi-directional information sharing and feedback. The ECAC Project Coordinator, Professional Development Coordinator, and Data Coordinator will staff workgroups related to the goals and objectives, including the professional development planning workgroup and the data collection workgroup, and will report on progress, challenges, and needs to the ECAC at monthly meetings. Utilizing this structure will ensure timely and efficient communication between groups and partners to maximize efforts and resources.

To facilitate communication between the ECAC and the larger early childhood community, KECCS stakeholder meetings are held semi-annually as a forum for sharing information, providing training opportunities, collecting feedback, and networking across the State. The 2009 KECCS Impact Survey identified the well-attended stakeholder meetings as a valuable tool for systems building. Stakeholder meetings are inclusive; open invitations are posted on the KECCS website, and are distributed through ECAC partner agencies. The semi-annual meetings are a built-in mechanism for public input about the Kansas ECAC activities. In

addition, documents will be posted on the KECCS website for broad distribution and to gather feedback.

ECAC meetings. As has been the precedent set by the ELCC, the Kansas ECAC will meet monthly to: monitor implementation of the ECAC project; monitor implementation of the KECCS Plan; facilitate communication among stakeholders and workgroups; and, coordinate resources. Regular monthly meetings provide an opportunity for timely discussions on issues of critical interest to the early childhood system in Kansas, and to deepen collaboration building among early childhood programs.

If any data is to be collected, maintained, and/or disseminated, clearance may be required from OMB. This clearance pertains to any "collection of information that is conducted or sponsored by ACF."

Data are collected in support of Kansas ECAC efforts. Project staff will follow OMB guidelines and receive Institutional Review Board (IRB) approval as necessary.

Provide a list of organizations, cooperating entities, consultants, or other key individuals who will work on the project along with a short description of the nature of their effort or contribution.

A list of KECCS stakeholders is provided in Appendix X. The KECCS Plan is based on the collective experience of over 150 early childhood stakeholders. Through semi-annual meetings, KECCS stakeholder will continue providing input on systems development efforts.

The ECAC was authorized through the Improving Head Start for School Readiness Act of 2007. While the ECAC encompasses all early childhood, not only Head Start, Head Start continues to be a key partner in the KECCS and ECAC efforts. In particular, the Head Start State Collaboration Office has provided leadership to a number of program and infrastructure

initiatives that are critical to the success of the system. The Kansas Fatherhood Coalition and Kansas Parent Leadership Conference are examples of the coordination of KECCS and Head Start priorities. Efforts are made to coordinate across projects to maximize the resources and supports available to children and families. Table 4 (in Appendix X) provides a detailed alignment of the HSSCO priorities, KECCS goals and objectives, and the proposed ECAC goals and objectives.

The Kansas ECAC has a history of collaborative progress in developing and sustaining a comprehensive early childhood system. Through the ELCC in support of the KECCS Plan, the ECAC has extensive experience in group decision-making, information sharing, collaboration building, and information dissemination. Kansas ECAC membership represents a multi-disciplinary approach to early childhood, including expertise in health, early childhood education, early intervention, and child abuse and neglect prevention.

Describe how the State plans to sustain a statewide, high-quality, comprehensive early childhood development system beyond the three years of the grant.

The significant support that the KECCS Plan has received from early childhood stakeholders, the Governor, the Legislature, and business and foundation leaders has laid the groundwork for sustainability of the early childhood system in Kansas. Specifically, the ECAC and Plan management will support future funding by:

- Continued relationship building and involvement with foundation and business leaders across the State. Broad buy-in and non-governmental support will be critical to the ongoing success of the Plan.
- Being accountable for dollars spent on early childhood programs and services. Projects funded through the Children's Initiative Funds and Early Childhood Block Grants will

undergo a rigorous evaluation process to monitor program performance, ensuring effective and efficient use of available financial resources.

- Increased collaboration among Plan partners on grant-writing. Nearly 40% of respondents to the KECCS Impact Survey indicated that the KECCS Plan has positively affected their agency by increasing collaboration with new and existing partners on grant-writing and funding. Eighty percent of respondents indicated that the KECCS Plan encourages coordination and collaboration among agencies and service providers. The Early Childhood Block Grant was a successful first step in tapping into this collaborative nature of the Plan to ensure that comprehensive services were provided in communities, utilizing the best resources available in the state.

The Kansas Department of Health and Environment was recently awarded a \$4.25 million Project LAUNCH cooperative agreement from the Substance Abuse and Mental Health Services Administration to support the KECCS and a parallel system in Finney County. Eighty percent of the funds go directly to Finney County to serve over 600 families through a variety of evidence-based services. On the state level, funds will be directed to further support KECCS goals and collaboration.

(c) Staff and Position Data

Provide a biographical sketch and job description for each key person appointed or assigned. Job descriptions for each vacant key position should be included as well. As new key staff is appointed, biographical sketches will also be required.

Table 5. Key personnel, hours, and project responsibilities.

Position Title: Name, Qualifications	FTE (Hours/week)	Project Responsibilities
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ECAC Project Coordinator, TBD	1.0 (40)	Manage the day-to-day aspects of the project; coordinate efforts among the ECAC, workgroups, and KECCS Plan; participate in and provide support to project-related workgroups;
Professional Development Coordinator, TBD	1.0 (40)	Provide staff support to professional development planning workgroup; coordinate crosswalk of standards; assist in registry selection and implementation
Data Coordinator, TBD	1.0 (40)	Coordinate longitudinal data systems project; provide staff support to workgroup; identify data sources; develop data sharing agreements; collect, manage, and analyze data
*ECAC Members	5 hrs/month	Provide leadership and guidance to implementation of goals and objectives; participate in preparation of needs assessments and plan updates;

*Not funded by Kansas ECAC project.

Job descriptions for the ECAC Project Coordinator, the Professional Development Coordinator and the Data Coordinator are included in Appendix X. Additional support will be provided to the ECAC efforts at no cost to the grant by the Young Child Wellness Expert, funded at the state level by the Kansas Project LAUNCH initiative.

(d) Organizational Profiles

Identify the agency or joint interagency office responsible for management of the State Advisory Council and the individual designated by the Governor to coordinate the activities of the State Advisory Council.

The Legislature established the Kansas Children's Cabinet and Trust Fund (KCCTF) in 1999 to make recommendations to the Governor and the Legislature on ways to improve the lives of children in Kansas. The KCCTF consists of 15 members who have extensive experience and knowledge about the needs of children and families. The Governor appoints five of the members and legislative leadership appoints four members. The Secretary of Health and

Environment, the Secretary of Social and Rehabilitation Services, a member of the Board of Regents, the Commissioner of Education, the Commissioner of Juvenile Justice, and a Justice of the Supreme Court are non-voting ex-officio members.

The KCCTF, through its Executive Director, is responsible for the oversight and coordination of the statewide network of community-based family support programs. The KCCTF makes all final decisions regarding policies and practices within the context of state policies, rules and regulations. These decisions are made with input from State child and family stakeholders and organizations.

One of the KCCTF's primary responsibilities is to assist the Governor in the development and implementation of a coordinated comprehensive delivery system that serves children and their families. The KCCTF:

- Identifies barriers to and gaps in services due to boundaries between departments and agencies;
- Facilitates interagency and interdepartmental cooperation;
- Identifies methodologies for combining funds across department boundaries;
- Encourages and facilitates joint planning and coordination between the public and private sectors;
- Oversees an accountability framework and advises the Governor and Legislature regarding the use of monies credited to the Children's Initiative Funds derived from the Master Tobacco Settlement;
- Provides, through its Executive Director, oversight and coordination of the statewide network of community-based family support programs; and

- Directs and monitors the expenditures of various funding sources of community-based family support programs.

The KCCTF is responsible for managing the Kansas Children's Trust Fund, making recommendations on expenditures from the Children's Initiative Fund, and convening the Kansas Strengthening Families and Kansas Early Childhood Comprehensive Systems Plans:

- The Kansas Children's Trust Fund is financed by a fee on marriage licenses, the sale of limited edition prints, and the sale of specialty license plates that promote child abuse and neglect prevention. These funds are available to expand the capacity of community-based child abuse and neglect prevention and family resource programs.
- The KCCTF makes annual recommendations to the Governor and Legislature regarding the expenditures from the Children's Initiative Fund established from the Master Tobacco Settlement. The KCCTF has elected to concentrate a portion of this money on early childhood development and education. These funds provide community-based grants with a focus on local control, community planning and collaboration to initiate, enhance, and expand programs which affect early childhood.
- The KCCTF brings together over 80 stakeholders to move toward the State's vision to reduce the likelihood of child abuse and neglect and to make Kansas the best place to raise a child as part of the Kansas Strengthening Families Plan (KSF Plan). The KSF Plan strengthens existing efforts and reframes child abuse and neglect to embed prevention strategies into existing systems in Kansas. These efforts not only work to prevent child abuse and neglect, but also have a global focus of strengthening support for all families in Kansas. KSF Plan also supports the KECCS Plan through the Family Supports goal. In alignment with the KECCS Plan, the KSF Plan uses a prevention framework that promotes protective factors

and minimizes risk factors for all children and families by bridging a variety of disciplines, agencies, services, and prevention approaches.

The KCCTF will contract with the Institute for Educational Research and Public Service at the University of Kansas to manage the Kansas ECAC project. The Institute currently serves as project manager of the KECCS Plan. The Institute has an extensive history of early childhood systems development and project management that aligns leadership expertise and stakeholders in the field to spur action. The Institute, established in 1997, serves both School of Education faculty members and the State of Kansas. With a mission to promote educational research and public service, it employs numerous PhDs and EdDs in Education, MSWs, and several doctoral students. The multidisciplinary spectrum of the Institute provides tremendous support for programming, instructional technology design, and systems design and collaboration.