

Preschool Development Grant: Strategic Planning Community Feedback Round Three

TERRALUNA COLLABORATIVE

UPDATED MAY 2020



Data Overview: Data collection

- Total focus groups = 33, from tribal communities to schools
- Number of participants ranged from 1 to 29 with the median group size = 10 (Total more than 390)*
- Data collected beginning on 11/25 and going through 12/21
- The majority of focus groups were conducted in English, with 2 Spanish, 1 Somali and 1 Hmong/Karen/Burmese focus groups
- Anomalies
 - 1 focus group had a completely different set of questions (see data)
 - 4 groups had no date information
- PAC notes were representative of the feedback and focused on issues around transparency and trauma informed care (these are captured in a separate tab)

Data Overview: 5 Questions asked

5 Questions were asked give us insight into how communities felt about the Strategic Plan (and more):

- Q1: What part of the strategic plan makes you feel **hopeful**?
 - gets at the faith people have in the plan and/or system
- Q2: If this plan were **successful**, what would be different in your life, your community, and/or for the families your agency supports?
 - what do outcomes look like/how can success be measured as defined by the community

Data Overview: 5 Questions asked cont.

5 Questions were asked give us insight into how communities felt about the Strategic Plan (and more):

- Q3: How might you be **engaged** in making these changes successful?
→ individual engagement and involvement (will vary based on capacity)
- Q4: How would you want to be **informed** moving forward?
→ Communication! How should the state provide information to Communities
- Q5: Is there **anything else** you want to share?
→ great additional comments

Analysis Process

- Each statement from participants and observation from facilitators was transcribed verbatim into the database
 - If translated from another language, this is captured after translation into English
 - If grammatical or spelling errors did not impact the meaning of the statement, they were edited
- Common themes (as determined by the evaluator) were noted as present or absent*
 - Qualitative coding is a process used to conduct thematic analysis of data. The process includes grouping/clustering similar ideas, responses, and data together to identify salient/core themes related to the evaluation question and use of findings. Those engaged in the process may then review the groupings/clusters to examine the relationships, patterns, and similarities between the themes, and what insights can be formed based on the themes.
- Additional themes emerged and were noted in a second tab where descriptions were more nuanced, detailed, and contextual
- Meeting details, where available, were captured to provide context
- Data can be sorted by location, question or theme
- Strong quotes that felt representative, provide suggestions or context are also noted



What?

Common themes from Analysis



Common Themes - 1

- **Systems change/equity/trust:** Participants want to see their culture represented, racial inequities fixed and see a need for systems change and/or expressed hope for change
- **Critical of government** programs/success but participants want to ensure that this plan happens
- **Benefit for children/child care staff and organizations** (traditional and nontraditional)
- **Addiction** support
- **Family support:** includes a wide range of needed or potential supports for families that will result from this plan (including housing, overall financial support, and general statements about a better life for families)
- **Mental Health:** need for integrated supports for children and families
- **Trauma-Informed** practices: increased training for providers (child care, health care, social services) and access

Common Themes - 2

- Improved **Navigation** of services (better access, community-based, more data sharing)
- **Local** focus (communities are unique): need for more flexible support at this level around culturally appropriate solutions, service delivery, language, and spiritual needs
- **Community support** was offered by many participants and felt by them in the plan (includes involvement and information exchange with the Children's cabinet as well as solution generating)
- Need for more **details**, specifically around how the money will flow, what the processes are for putting strategies in place, and how outcomes will be communicated*
- Participants were **grateful** to have been included and heard throughout this process; they are **hopeful** about the plan and that they their communities will benefit from changes to child care, access to services, and community based solutions, while recognizing the need for a mental health and trauma-informed lens

Common Themes - 3

- **Collaboration:** Across agencies and with communities matters to communities, builds trust and improves outcomes by maximizing resources
- **Transportation** is barrier to accessing healthcare, child care, and other services
- Interest in increased **training** for community members to better support community efforts and promote the welfare of the residents through better jobs
- The plan will results in **less stress** for families if successful (through improved mental health, better childcare, streamlined access to services, and more empathy in the system)



What?

Additional Themes: Details and
Examples



Community specific feedback

- There is a tension between participants' desire to move this forward and concern that it will be decided on by the state, be inflexible, be based on laws that are unfair or don't make sense. They are concerned that change will not be felt in their own community. For some communities, basic needs just are not being met: child care options, case managers, addiction/mental health support
- [one facilitator observed] There were a variety of needs that came from this (Hmong) group, but the piece of making too much money to get assistance came up again. This comes up at least once in every focus group.

Culture matters

- Navigation of resources: better, more culturally appropriate access; more involvement from the community, more hubs that are geographically and culturally diverse; more continuity across systems to allow for the least burden on those who need supports and in a way that does not inflict more trauma or stress
- Having culturally appropriate and language specific care and resources came up often. Not only do participants want those caring for their children to look like them, they want access to resources to be culturally appropriate and diverse, to reflect their own communities. (For example: The people who teach children would look like them. More diversity in the classrooms starting with pre-k)

Community offered involvement

- Participants offered many suggestions (seen in the last column W):
 - Participate in needs assessment strategies to identify areas of improvement for the community
 - Incentivize community members to volunteer in schools
 - Community members to be aware of resources and advocate for families
 - Community solution making (with agencies) is important for community investment and trust building with agencies and each other

The Poverty Cliff

The poverty cliff is a problem (can't get off assistance) - voiced in many ways and multiple groups. Participants know that people fall through the cracks by making slightly too much money, or not fitting every single eligibility criteria. They also understand that the families on the fringe are the most vulnerable, because support/resources would get them over the hump to stay independent while the lack of access puts them in a situation where they are in and out of services and lack stability.

Children and Childcare

- [Participants] were hopeful for FFN support as many need it, use it, and look forward to having more flexible child care to support flexible or nontraditional working hours
- Supporting the pipeline for increase in number and quality of childcare: how to train more staff, create more child care centers, create more culturally appropriate programs, maintain staff and support Professional development, improve pay for teachers
- Tension between trusting the system's efforts and how decisions are actually made throughout the government to ensure that families and children are truly at the center

Evaluation and Assessment

- How will evaluation incorporate the voices of the community? Hopeful that there will be “follow up and statistics to share to continue to move forward”
- Desire for transparency: where is the money going? How are decisions being made? How is impact being evaluated? How is continuous input being gathered?
- In addition to feelings of hope and optimism, community members are interested in the details:
 - who will be making the decisions?
 - Where and how does money flow?
 - What are the monitoring and evaluation steps and subjects?
 - How do ongoing measures of success get shared with the community?
 - What are the exact plan steps or processes to meet all the goals in the plan?

Potential Outcomes

In general, there were a lot of areas of hope and participants described what they would see if this plan worked:

- less stress
- more children in schools
- whole family wellness
- involvement of the community in solutions - source of hope
- sustainability for alternative child care models
- mental health access and availability

Unexpected benefits of this process and plan

Value of the plan and the hope participants feel is vast: many expressed value in being at the table and were grateful, felt heard through the results of the plan and some even felt a greater connection to the community. It is possible that this type of investment in the community reflects the power and agency a community has to make changes, be involved, and ask for what they need (seeing that it is getting met through plans like this).

- From one group: Overwhelming stated—that if this plan moves forward they would feel more connect to the community
- ***Theme: Has the opportunity to better connect the professionals working within programs and agencies in their work and develop processes that develop trusting relationships with families and identified professionals



What?

What is missing from the Plan?



Additional support for families and communities

- Care for Teenagers: more activities for them; concern about psychology and behavior issues
- “supporting those that are or have been incarcerated and their families”
- “trauma related to substance abuse is a huge barrier”
- “Money should go to shelters”
- Funding for translation services
- “Will there only be money for public resources (ex. Head Start) or will there also be resources for non-profits, church based childcare programs? (additional participants requested more investment in spiritual programs that were culturally appropriate)”

Resources for children with special needs

- “As a parent, all of this sounds really good. As a child care provider, is this just for families who are low income and multi-cultural or can this be for a family with children with special needs. For example, a family that has a child with autism but has a high income, will they get the support they need?”*
- “Where are children with disabilities in this plan? Why does it stop at age 5?”
- “Support for Early Educators for Autism services”

Support for young and diverse families

- “Knowledge of various diversity and don’t forget economic diversity and LGBT. We hear more about race so wonder if the other voices are being heard.”
- “How do we focus on support young (teen) parents and first-time parents through this process?”

Child care needs are complex

- “If we can recruit and pay our teachers more we can find more qualified teachers to open more classrooms and have more staff in the classrooms to support the children with behaviors and other issues”
- “We would see a diverse population of Early Childhood professionals, and see educators that reflect their community”
- “More evidence based practice in curriculum and strategies for staff and provision of multilingual education”
- “I hope that Parent Aware is imbedded in action plan and that there will be incentives to move to 4 star rating. We’re 3 star rated and want to stay there because we receive \$ that is so important to us.” (2 participants)
- Voiced need to retain quality and long-term teachers by: preventing burnout, increasing mentoring, providing better pay and benefits, and reward/bonuses for long-term commitment(s)

The background is a solid light green color. In the top-left and bottom-right corners, there are decorative graphics consisting of several overlapping circles. Each circle has a white outer ring, a thin purple inner ring, and a light green center. The circles are arranged in a way that they appear to be floating or overlapping each other.

So What?
Potential Challenges

Evaluation and Accountability

- “The section about evaluation scares me. There is so much evaluation now.”
- “Hold government accountable for the funding decisions. They should follow up with the folks they’ve given money to. It’s more than just funding, it’s the follow through.”
- ***theme: There is a lot of skepticism about this plan working and a lot of direct questions about how this plan will actually impact people and where the money will go. Also questions on who makes the decisions about this plan and about the money. Folks wanted some education on who makes decisions within departments of Education, Health and Human Resources and how the Governor ties into all of this.
- How one participant would be engaged: “pushing back for accountability from state agencies”
- There was a long conversation about what the chain of command looks like with decision making on this project: “If the feds give the money, how will the money be allocated? How will this work?”

Evaluation and Accountability cont.

Standout Quotes:

- “They answered this and put it on paper, but are they going to do it? Are they writing this down but do what they want to do anyway? Who is going to be the person/entity to hold them accountable? Who will go back and tell them that they said they would do this plan? And what is the timeframe, because this is an aggressive plan. If it’s 10 years, then why bother at all. But we need some accountability team put together to hold them accountable for what is in this plan?”
- “...with the evaluation, that’s steeped in colonized mindsets of ‘I’m helping you, so I need to document how I’m helping you.’ The way that they would monitor, it would be monitoring from their point of view, but not necessarily from the standpoint of the people being served.”
- ***theme: There was a focus here on wealth development and how money will affect people directly. Instead of the money going just into programs and systems that folks don’t think is working well now.

What is shaping how communities might experience this plan?

- “Our unemployment is so low that there is more need for more child care, which is positive.”
- “Not safe to have police in schools”
- *There wasn't a great deal of understanding around what the Children's cabinet does or how accountability will flow
- “We are not really in the loop with doctors. When we talk about community, doctors are busy and that’s true but we don’t connect.”
- “They show no respect, they never answer calls, they lose your paperwork and don’t even call to let you know – The case workers are a joke. They really need to get someone in there that really cares about the people.”



So What?

Community members are allies



How did communities volunteer support?

Many participants offered to participate in more meetings, committees and to stay engaged with their local organizations. Some indicated they would advocate for families and help them navigate resources as part of their current role or as a volunteer. Many indicated more support for child care as well as offering to bridge the state with local communities so that voices could be heard and solutions co-generated.

- ***Theme: Partnering to ensure state and local efforts are coordinated
- ***Theme: Staying informed and engaging in advocacy
- ***Theme: Participating in local meetings and taskforces
- ***Theme: Attending local meetings and community networking

How did communities volunteer support? cont.

Help to make solutions fit their local community:

- ***Theme: Commitment from all to work within local community to plan and implement
- ***Theme: Ability for communities to be involved in lobbying/state process
- ***Theme: There was definitely an agreement among the group that we ALL need to take charge of these plans and help them implement for success. “We all have felt the frustrations, it would be great if we all can feel the success!”
- “I am hopeful that I will have the opportunity to be deeply involved in multiple aspects of this work based on my role within Child Care Aware, Early Learning Scholarships, Workforce development, etc.”
- “Working in Public Health, I believe I am in a wonderful position to reach out to the community and families to help implement changes”

Community Engagement: Communication

- Create a Community Engagement Plan
 - Given the current atmosphere, some areas of concern may be heightened, some priorities may change
 - Participants appreciated having input in the plan – how can this continue? How can they be a part of assessing this plan and feel empowered to contribute to its success?
 - Should be appropriate (for the audience, culturally, etc.), honest/transparent and frequent

Community Engagement: Communication cont.

Participants provided a variety of preferred methods for communication that ranged from newsletters to providing information through trusted community members (child care providers, health care providers, local centers)

Some also suggested the role of a local liaison who could serve to answer questions about the ongoing work and provide updates.

- In person meetings, gatherings or focus groups were the most popular suggestion, followed by e-mail and social media.
- Information by websites and monthly newsletters from the state (Children's Cabinet, local foundations, MDE for example) were also requested
- A complete list of these suggestions can be found in the database*

Community Engagement: Communication cont.

Information should be provided consistently in an inclusive and actionable way:

- ***theme: There was a theme that goal four was important. Overall that there should be better awareness of people working with children on information that could be helpful for parents. Also that this should be delivered in the language that parents can understand.
- “There would be correct information in our language and we would be treated well.”
- “Linguistic alignment is important and language access. People want to be helped and heard.”
- “Keep us in the loop, we're OK with getting quick updates either directly or through your contact here at MPS”
- Commonly held sentiment: Important to have everyone’s voice heard.
- ***Theme: Make sure that this information is delivered in a layered approach—agency, community ECE professionals, families, etc.



Now what?



Building Community Trust

Trust was mentioned throughout the focus groups.

For communities that feel marginalized, stressed and undervalued, how does this happen (especially in our current context)?

Facilitators OF the community convey that communities are seen and heard.

Provide small group discussions or anonymous feedback opportunities in an ongoing manner.

Questions for programmers: Moving from data driven learning to action

Questions for MDE:

- What do these mean to you?
- What was missed?
- What did you see that was expected?
- What did you see that was unexpected?
- What do you want to focus on for decision making?

THANK YOU

