



A Framework for Choosing a State-Level Early Childhood GOVERNANCE SYSTEM

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I. Introduction

In the United States, more than 60% of all children from birth to age five spend time in the care of someone other than their parents.¹ And child development research, neuroscience, and program evaluation affirm the long-lasting effects that high-quality early childhood experiences have on individual and societal outcomes, including school readiness and persistence, economic vitality, workforce preparation, and mental health.² Early education and care services for young children are provided by a wide range of programs with different designs and purposes, including the federal Head Start program; state child care programs that represent a mix of federal and state funds and requirements (and parent co-pays); and state-funded preschool programs. These essential funding streams are part of a larger array of programs that include special education, health and mental health services, home visiting, nutrition, and more. Building comprehensive early childhood systems focuses on these early care and education services and all the other programs and services necessary for healthy child development and learning

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including family support, early intervention, and child health and mental health. States increasingly have sought to develop new governance structures that align authority and oversight of early childhood programs and services.³

A state-level system of early childhood programs and services for children from birth to age five can exist under several different governance models. Governance “refers to how (often multiple) programs and entities are managed to promote efficiency, excellence, and equity. It comprises the traditions, institutions and processes that determine how power is exercised, how constituents are given voice, and how decisions are made on issues of mutual concern.”⁴ An effective model of governance should create coherence among policies and services, but current systems of early childhood governance typically are fragmented. Careful and deliberate assessment of a state’s early childhood governance structure is an integral step in reducing fragmentation, uneven quality, and inequity in programs and services.⁵

¹ *Infants & Young Children Learning*, Child Trends Data Bank, <http://www.childtrendsdatabank.org/?q=node/41> (accessed Sept. 18, 2012).

² *Building Ready States: A Governor’s Guide to Supporting a Comprehensive, High-Quality Early Childhood State System*, NGA Center for Best Practices, Oct. 2010.

³ The BUILD Initiative and the Early Childhood Systems Working Group have defined an early childhood system as a system of systems that encompasses the areas listed above. In this paper, however, the term early childhood governance is used loosely. Most recent early childhood governance reform has occurred in the arena of formal early care and education.

⁴ Kagan and Kauerz, *Governing American Early Care and Education in Continuing Issues in Early Childhood Education* (Feeney, Galper, and Seefeldt, eds., 2009).

⁵ Goffin, Martella, and Coffman, *Vision to Practice: Setting a New Course for Early Childhood Governance* (Jan. 2011).



Governance is a strategy, not a goal. Governance changes at the state level will be most effective when state leaders use them to help achieve critical early childhood goals, rather than to create the appearance of activity in the absence of a clear agenda. Some states have benefitted from governance changes, but achieving those benefits does not happen automatically. This paper is meant to help state leaders who want to improve early childhood outcomes make decisions about governance that will help them achieve their goals.

This paper provides state policy leaders with a framework to consider and assess early childhood governance options. The paper examines current state practices for oversight of policies and programs related to children from birth to age five, exploring and analyzing the different governance approaches. Because of interest in some states that are either implementing or considering governance changes, it places a particular focus on states that consolidate programs in the state education agency. The paper also acknowledges the values and policy choices reflected in each governance approach and analyzes why a state might choose a certain approach, based on its context and interests. It begins by introducing the concept of governance and the history of early childhood governance before examining three governance structures:

- Coordination among agencies, where administrative authority is vested in multiple agencies that are expected to collaborate with each other;
- Consolidation, in which multiple programs are administered by the same agency, particularly state education agencies; and
- Creation, the creation of a new agency focused on early education and care.

The paper then illustrates these three structures with current state examples and practices. Finally, it assesses the advantages and challenges of each governance structure, with recommendations for state leaders on how to determine which governance structure might make the most sense in their states.

II. Governance Models

A. Introduction to Governance

1. *Conceptual Definition*

As noted above, governance refers to the means by which authority and accountability for certain functions is allocated. A governance model places authority within an entity or entities for activities including decisions around budgeting and managing resources (such as fiscal responsibilities and personnel); management of data; and developing, implementing, and monitoring policies, programs, and regulations. Governance similarly necessitates allocation of accountability – for finances, workforce, program quality, and the individual child or student – for an entity or entities.⁶ Ideally, authority and accountability are assigned in an efficient manner to ensure purposeful oversight of the enterprise. Early childhood governance refers to a state’s organizational structure and its placement of authority and accountability for making program, policy, financing, and implementation decisions for publicly funded early care and education for children from birth to age five.

2. *History of Governance*

Over roughly half a century, the vision for early childhood governance has evolved, reflecting states’ deepening understanding of effective practice. Initially, beginning in the 1960s, states focused narrowly on the governance of individual programs; this programmatic approach generally resulted in fragmentation of effort, with little infrastructure or

⁶ *Streamlining Government through Early Learning Governance*, The Policy Group for Florida’s Families & Children, Feb. 15, 2011; Kagan, *Early Childhood Governance in Florida: Evolving Ideas and Practice (Final Presentation of the Policy Matters Project)*, Oct. 2007 (hereinafter “Final Presentation”); *Governing American Early Care and Education*, *supra* note 4.

quality control.⁷ Contradictory standards, including conflicting regulatory requirements, led to inefficient results. Next, beginning in the mid-1980s, states began to focus on cooperation and collaboration across services, exploring the use of government cabinets and management teams that made recommendations to state leadership and establishing advisory taskforces and councils that often included public and private actors. Generally, however, these partnerships lacked the authority and accountability over core functions to make them true governance models.

Most recently, over the course of the last decade, states increasingly have focused on how to align administrative authority for major programs. This governance shift reflects a desire to achieve greater quality, equity, and accountability in delivery of services. It also has corresponded with the rapid growth of state preschool programs,⁸ which represent a recognition by states of the developmental importance of the early childhood years.

3. Governance Components and Values

For many early education and care providers, the central funding streams are Head Start, child care, and state preschool. Of those three, the state's role is most significant in child care and state preschool, and governance efforts have often focused on those programs. As noted above, states have also sought to consider child care and preschool in the context of a larger system that includes special education, health and mental health services, home visiting, nutrition, and other programs that focus on or address the needs of young children. A particular challenge in this area is ensuring that the needs of infants and toddlers are given adequate emphasis. Head Start, as a federal funding stream which requires local governance, is often made a part of the state's governance structure

through the administrative placement of the Head Start Collaboration Director.

The state should recognize components of effective governance. For example, the governance model will be most effective if it places resources, authority, and accountability within an entity or entities that enjoy legitimacy in the eyes of stakeholders.⁹ The entity should have the reputation and standing to receive recognition as the proper manager of the programs it administers.¹⁰ Correspondingly, perception of legitimacy must be backed up by ability; the entity must have the required expertise, capability, and capacity to facilitate the necessary work.¹¹

Additionally, the state should ensure that the governing entity has access to relevant data to inform accountability and, simultaneously, operate in a transparent manner, providing accessible and understandable information about its efforts.¹²

The early learning system as a whole addresses multiple needs, including the need to improve long-term developmental outcomes for diverse populations of children – and the short-term needs of working families with a wide range of employment circumstances. To bring coherence to the diverse set of services attempting to meet those needs, there are a number of cross-cutting values that an early childhood governance model should strive to support. These include the following five values:¹³

- **Coordination:** The governance model should connect the different parts and programs of the early childhood system, reflecting its comprehensive nature.
- **Alignment:** The model should provide coherence across system-wide tasks like data collection, quality standards, and outcome measurement, and should

” The governance model should be accountable to the early childhood system and its stakeholders in terms of quality, equality, and outcomes.

⁷ See *Vision to Practice*, supra note 5; *Final Presentation*, supra note 6; *Governing American Early Care and Education*, supra note 4.

⁸ See *The State of Preschool 2011*, National Institute for Early Education Research, 2011, at page 12.

⁹ *Early Childhood System Governance: Lessons from State Experiences*, BUILD, Nov. 2010.

¹⁰ *Governing American Early Care and Education*, supra note 4.

¹¹ *Early Childhood System Governance*, supra note 10.

¹² *Id.*

¹³ *Id.*; *Vision to Practice*, supra note 5; *Governing American Early Care and Education*, supra note 4.

break down silos associated with the administration of funding and oversight of programs.

- **Sustainability:** The governance model should be able to navigate political and administrative changes and be designed to best account for the breadth of the early childhood system's reach (in terms of programs and services).
- **Efficiency:** The model should allocate resources wisely, reduce duplication of effort, and provide a significant return on investment.
- **Accountability:** The governance model should be accountable to the early childhood system and its stakeholders in terms of quality, equality, and outcomes and also should be able to hold services and programs accountable for their performance.

These values are explored in greater detail in section IV.B. of this paper.

B. Governance Model Options

Early childhood governance, in practice and theory, exists across a spectrum of structures – from coordinated governance (potentially including an explicit leadership role in the governor's office) to consolidation of authority and accountability in an executive branch agency to creation of an executive branch agency focused solely on early childhood services and programs.¹⁴ The remainder of this section of the paper focuses on these three governance models.

Additionally, within each of these structures, there is room for greater or less decentralization (whereby the state empowers local communities or regions to initiate, implement, and monitor efforts). There also is room within each governance structure for public-private partnerships, with the state utilizing actors outside of the public sector to support its oversight in appropriate ways. These cross-cutting features of governance are not dependent on the administrative structure, and are explored in greater detail in subsection II.B.2 of this paper.

1. Three Major Models

a. Coordinated Governance

The model of coordinated governance places authority and accountability for early childhood programs and services across multiple public agencies. In many states, this is the status quo, and states electing to preserve this governance structure sometimes seek to improve coordination and collaboration among the agencies. In some instances those efforts are formalized through interagency agreements.¹⁵ The term “coordinated governance” is used here even though in some states there is very little actual coordination among the agencies responsible for early childhood programs.



A particular challenge in this area is ensuring that the needs of infants and toddlers are given adequate emphasis.

As one variation of this model, a state's governor's office can provide leadership in coordinating governance in the absence of a lead agency. As noted above, historically, many states relied on a children's cabinet or special task force established by their governors to encourage coordinated early childhood governance;¹⁶ this type of body provides additional, dedicated leadership for early childhood system work. Additionally, states report that more progress is made in early childhood where the governor makes the early childhood system a priority,¹⁷ although that does not necessarily involve a special governor's office of early childhood.

b. Consolidated Governance

The model of consolidated governance occurs where the state places authority and accountability for the early childhood system in one executive branch agency – for example, the state education agency – for development, implementation, and oversight of multiple early childhood programs and services. When moving to this governance structure, a foundational

¹⁵ Note that some federally funded programs (e.g., Early Childhood Comprehensive Systems grant program and Part C of IDEA) require an interagency planning body. *Building Ready States*, *supra* note 2.

¹⁶ *Id.*

¹⁷ *Early Childhood System Governance*, *supra* note 10.

¹⁴ *Final Presentation*, *supra* note 6.

question for the state will be which agency will be designated as the governing entity. This choice can affect the underlying values and principles of future work.¹⁸

c. Creation of a New Agency

Finally, a state might choose to create a new executive branch agency or entity within an agency that has the authority and accountability for the early childhood system. The governing entity thus might be an independent state agency with a single mission focused on early childhood. This type of governance structure requires that the comprehensive set of activities associated with early childhood be situated with the created entity. Generally, these activities would include Head Start collaboration (the state's primary responsibility in the Head Start programs), child care, and prekindergarten, and might also include home visitation and oversight for Parts B and C of the Individuals with Disabilities Education Act.

2. Cross-Cutting Issues

Regardless of where along this spectrum of choices a state desires its early childhood governance structure to fall, there are several cross-cutting issues all states should acknowledge. First, nearly all states have formally designated an early childhood advisory council (ECAC) tasked with recommending a strategic plan for comprehensive services statewide. ECACs have been created under the federal mandate of the Head Start Act and with federal funding from the American Recovery and Reinvestment Act of 2009 (ARRA). Advisory bodies like the ECACs are not administrative – administrative structures require authority to make and implement policy decisions, not simply give advice. At the same time, the emergence and work of the ECACs can serve a complementary role to the state's administration of early childhood, including as state agencies act on the recommendations of the ECAC.¹⁹

Second, within any state governance structure, the state should consider the degree to which regional governance structures can advance its goals for the early childhood system. States might consider regionalization of governance to empower local communities to initiate, implement, and monitor efforts.²⁰ Regional structures might receive certain authority, including in the allocation of resources, and also might play a role in holding programs and services accountable for results, and states might find that policies are less controversial when vetted and implemented at the local level. At the same time, states must recognize the potential for inequities in access and quality where decision-making is left to local communities, some of which may lack necessary resources or political will. Regardless of the governance structure selected – coordination, consolidation, or creation – a state might place greater or less emphasis on decentralization depending on its context.

Third, public-private relationships can play a role in coordinated, consolidated, or created governance structures. Indeed, due to increasing complexities and costs associated with public programming and shrinking state government budgets, many fields (including early childhood) have experienced greater hybridization of the public and private sectors.²¹ Public-private partnerships can enhance the sustainability of a governance structure by supporting certain components of the system (e.g., policy analysis, advocacy, communications, public investment and coordination, etc.) and at times can undertake certain roles inappropriate for purely public entities.²² At the same time, states must guard against conflicts of interest that could emerge.



¹⁸ *Governing American Early Care and Education*, *supra* note 4.

¹⁹ See generally *Early Childhood System Governance*, *supra* note 10. A complicating factor is that while ECACs are created to be advisory, the ARRA funds require them to administer grant funds for projects selected in 2010 and approved by the U.S. Department of Health and Human Services. These grant funds can blur the edges of the ECAC's advisory role.

²⁰ *Final Presentation*, *supra* note 6.

²¹ *Governing American Early Care and Education*, *supra* note 4.

²² *Backgrounder: Public-Private Partnerships*, the Ounce, April 2012: *Early Childhood System Governance*, *supra* note 10.

Finally, it is important for states to recognize that structural changes are only part of the equation. Changing the structure without changing related practices – rules, procedures, monitoring, and reporting, to name a few – will mean that existing silos have been moved closer together but not broken down. If the agency staff responsible for the day-to-day management of programs do not end up changing their job practices, then the high-level changes of a reorganization will likely have little impact on the field. While this paper does not explore these practical challenges in depth, it must acknowledge their importance. There is no question that successful governance initiatives require changes not just in where power lies but in how it is used.

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III. State Practice

A. Introduction

Having introduced the concept, history, and values of governance and explored the spectrum of options states have for governance models – coordination, consolidation, and creation – this paper now examines current governance choices that states are making. A state role in early childhood is, in many states, a comparatively recent development; while the federal Head Start program dates to the 1960s, the state role in child care primarily emerged in the 1990s, and the development of state preschool accelerated dramatically in the first decade of the 21st century. These programs often emerged in separate agencies, and several of the efforts to consolidate program administration have occurred in the last decade. This includes the standalone agencies created in Georgia, Massachusetts, and Washington; the dual-agency structure created in Pennsylvania; and the consolidation of child care into the state education agency in Maryland and Michigan.

B. State Examples

This section provides brief examples of early childhood governance models in states across the nation, illustrating coordination, consolidation, and creation structures.

1. Coordination

In most states, programmatic authority is spread across multiple agencies that are expected to collaborate with each other, often through formal structures. For example, in Connecticut, five state agencies – the departments of children and families, education, higher education, public health, and social services – have collaborated to gather data on early childhood professionals.²³ In Nebraska, the departments of education and of health and human services co-lead the state’s early intervention program and, through a memorandum of understanding, also share planning and administration of quality funds from the Child Care and Development Fund (CCDF).²⁴ Finally, multiple states – including Illinois, New Mexico, and Wisconsin, all Round 2 grantees of the Race to the Top-Early Learning Challenge (RTTT-ELC) – are using interagency strategies for carrying out their RTTT-ELC grant activities (see below).²⁵

As noted above, one formal structure sometimes used to strengthen coordination is the creation of a designated unit within the governor’s office responsible for leading collaboration. In Illinois, for example, the governor created a Governor’s Office of Early Childhood Development to coordinate the work of state’s ECAC and to support efforts to improve and expand programs and services.²⁶

Ohio’s Early Education and Development Office

²³ *Building Ready States*, *supra* note 2. Connecticut’s model is in the process of changing: On February 4, 2013 Connecticut’s Governor Malloy announced the establishment of the Office of Early Childhood (OEC). The new agency will provide a comprehensive, collaborative system for delivering improved programs and services to children ages zero to five and their parents.

²⁴ Nebraska’s Early Development Network website for more information on the state’s early intervention program: <http://edn.ne.gov/>.

²⁵ The Race to the Top-Early Learning Challenge website for grant and activity descriptions: <http://www2.ed.gov/programs/racetothetop-earlylearningchallenge/index.html>.

²⁶ *State Early Care and Education Public Policy Developments (FY 11)*, National Association for the Education of Young Children, Feb. 2011.

resides within the Governor's Office of 21st Century Education to work with and coordinate the early childhood work of interagency teams and the state's ECAC.²⁷ And in Colorado, the Office of the Lieutenant Governor is a key partner in the state's early childhood efforts, including through a June 2012 Memorandum of Understanding with the state's human services and education agencies.²⁸

2. Consolidation

The two primary sources of state funding for early education and care — particularly for 3- and 4-year-olds — are child care funds and state preschool, which are frequently blended and braided with federal Head Start funding (and special education funding) by individual programs.²⁹ Three states — California, Maryland, and Michigan³⁰ — have consolidated child care funds and state preschool into the state education agency.³¹ In all three states, the state's Head Start collaboration office is also housed within the state education agency.³² Additionally, Pennsylvania consolidated all of these programs and several others into a single office that is affiliated with both the state education agency (SEA) and the human services agency.

While California has administered child care in its state education agency for many years, Maryland and Michigan have made changes more recently. In Maryland, the state transferred all early care and education programs to the SEA in 2005 and created within the SEA the Division of Early Childhood



Development.³³ Michigan's new Office of Great Start at the SEA, created by executive order, opened in October 2011 and oversees programs related to the CCDF, the federal Individuals with Disabilities Education Act, state prekindergarten, Head Start collaboration, and parent education.³⁴

Pennsylvania centralized early learning and child development programs — previously governed by both the SEA and the Department of Public Welfare — in the Office of Child Development and Early Learning as a single organization that is part of both the Departments of Education and Public Welfare. The office is responsible for the financing, planning, implementation, and monitoring of child care, Head Start, pre-k, home visiting, and IDEA Parts B and C, initiatives previously overseen by more than two separate state agencies.³⁵

Other states have taken steps to build the SEA leadership in early childhood. Minnesota recently formed the Office of Early Learning in its SEA to oversee early childhood work.³⁶ In fiscal year 2012, state law in Florida established the Office of Early Learning within the SEA; this new office will administer the state's school readiness system and the Voluntary Prekindergarten Education Program, and also will house and oversee Florida's ECAC.³⁷

²⁷ See description of the Ohio Governor's Office of 21st Century Education from Ohio Education Matters: <http://www.ohioeducationmatters.org/reinventing-public-education/creating-21st-century-schools-ohio/ohios-education-reform-plan>.

²⁸ See *State Partners Join Forces for Colorado Children and Families*, Lt. Governor Garcia, <http://www.colorado.gov/cs/Satellite/LtGovGarcia/CBON/1251630622101> (accessed Nov. 6, 2012).

²⁹ Child care funds are a mix of federal and state funds, with the state having significant flexibility in its use of federal funds.

³⁰ *Michigan Executive Order 2011-8 (June 29, 2011)*, Office of the Governor of Michigan, http://www.michigan.gov/documents/snyder/EO-2011-8_357030_7.pdf (accessed Nov. 7, 2012).

³¹ Several other states place responsibility for child care and state preschool in the same agency but not the state education agency: the Arkansas Department of Human Services, the North Carolina Department of Health and Human Services, and the Vermont Department for Children and Families. In addition, Massachusetts and Washington house both within their standalone early childhood agency.

³² Ten states — Alaska, Connecticut, Delaware, Iowa, Minnesota, Nebraska, New Jersey, Ohio, Oregon, and Tennessee — have their Head Start collaboration office in the same agency as state preschool funding, but have a different agency primarily responsible for child care funding.

³³ *Building Ready States*, *supra* note 2; *Final Presentation*, *supra* note 6; *Governing American Early Care and Education*, *supra* note 4.

³⁴ Michigan's Office of Great Start website for program descriptions and anticipated outcomes: <http://www.michigan.gov/mde/0,4615,7-140-63533---,00.html>.

³⁵ *Building Ready States*, *supra* note 2; *Final Presentation*, *supra* note 6; *ELC draft*; *Governing American Early Care and Education*, *supra* note 4; *Annual Report 2010-11*, Pennsylvania Office of Child Development and Early Learning.

³⁶ *State Early Care and Education Public Policy Developments: Fiscal Year 2012*, Nat'l Assoc. for the Educ. of Young Children, 2012.

³⁷ *Id.*

While this paper focuses on birth to five governance, it is worth noting that some states are attempting to use a birth to eight frame for policy development. This frame potentially argues for consolidation in the state education agency, which by law will have primary oversight of policy in the early education years.

3. Creation

Finally, three states have created wholly separate state agencies tasked with authority over the state's early childhood services and programs. One state to go this route is Massachusetts, with state legislation in 2005 that created the Department of Early Education and Care, which has authority over and accountability for early education and care and after-school services for families.³⁸ In Washington, the governor-established State Department of Early Learning serves as a cabinet-level state agency for initiatives previously scattered across several departments.³⁹ And Georgia's Department of Early Care and Learning (Bright from the Start) is responsible for the state's early child care and early education.⁴⁰

C. State Examples of Cross-Cutting Issues

Nearly all states have formally designated an ECAC to support coordination among the states' early childhood services. The state education agency is required by federal law to be a part of the ECAC, but the ECAC plays a purely advisory role. Whatever structure a state chooses, the ECAC will need to find a role where it can contribute to legislative and executive branch decision-making while not overstepping its boundaries as an advisory body.

A number of states have developed regional structures to assist with the effective development and delivery of services. For example, Colorado's Local Early Childhood Councils provide a network of local early childhood councils that assist with development of

resources and implementation of early childhood initiatives.⁴¹ In Florida, 31 early learning coalitions administer CCDF funds, and 11 counties have children's services councils that administer local revenues for children's services.⁴² The Early Learning Challenge grant has also led to the creation of regional initiatives, including California's 16 regional consortia,⁴³ and North Carolina's Transformation Zones⁴⁴; both of these regional initiatives build on a tradition in those states of locally driven early learning administrative structures.

Many states also have entered into public-private partnerships, or have supported the creation of a public-private entity, to advance their goals for their early childhood systems. For example, Oregon is using federal American Recovery and Reinvestment Act child care quality funds to support the first phase of an Education and Quality Investment Partnership, a public-private partnership focused on improving child care quality throughout the state.⁴⁵ In Washington, state law requires the Departments of Early Learning and Social and Health Services to develop a nongovernmental, public-private initiative to coordinate investments in child development, and Thrive by Five Washington is the state's nonprofit public-private partnership for early learning, assembling business, philanthropic, and government leaders to work on initiatives including family education and home visiting.⁴⁶ And Alaska's Best Beginnings supports local partnerships, an imagination library, and public education and awareness.⁴⁷

⁴¹ *Early Childhood Councils*, Early Childhood Colorado Information Clearinghouse, http://earlychildhoodcolorado.org/state_initiatives/councils.cfm (accessed Sept. 18, 2012); *Building Ready States*, *supra* note 2; *Final Presentation*, *supra* note 6; *Governing American Early Care and Education*, *supra* note 4.

⁴² *Florida CCDF Subsidy Program Administration*, http://www.floridaearlylearning.com/Documents/SysDev-CCDF/2011-2013/CCDF2012_2013Part2-CCDFSubsidyProgramAdministration.pdf.

⁴³ *California's Race to the Top-Early Learning Challenge Federal Application - Body*, <http://www.cde.ca.gov/spl/cd/rt/documents/rttelcappbody.pdf>.

⁴⁴ *Race to the Top-Early Learning Challenge, North Carolina, Application for Initial Funding, CFDA Number: 84.412*, <http://www2.ed.gov/programs/racetothetop-earlylearningchallenge/applications/north-carolina.pdf>

⁴⁵ *Building Ready States*, *supra* note 2.

⁴⁶ *About Thrive by Five Washington*, Thrive by Five Washington, <http://thrivebyfivewa.org/about/> (accessed Sept. 18, 2012); *Final Presentation*, *supra* note 6; *Public-Private: Governing American Early Care and Education*, *supra* note 4; *Fiscal Year 2012*, *supra* note 35.

⁴⁷ *Fiscal Year 2012*, *supra* note 35.

³⁸ See *A Case Study of the Massachusetts Department of Early Education and Care*, Rennie Center for Education Research & Policy and Strategies for Children, April 2008. The creation of the new agency required a reorientation of state resources. See *Department of Early Education and Care Strategic Plan*, *supra* note 8; *Final Presentation*, *supra* note 6; *Governing American Early Care and Education*, *supra* note 4.

³⁹ See *Building Ready States*, *supra* note 2; *DEL Biennial Report to the Legislature and Longitudinal Study Plan*, Washington State Dept. of Early Learning, July 1, 2008.

⁴⁰ See *Final Presentation*, *supra* note 6; *Governing American Early Care and Education*, *supra* note 4.

D. Governance for Specific Federal and State Programs

The following table identifies the entity or entities tasked with oversight and authority of important early childhood programs. Note that each of these programs has separate rules, regulations and reporting requirements.⁴⁸ Where the state education agency has oversight cells are highlighted in blue; where oversight includes the SEA, cells are highlighted in orange. States that place oversight authority for child care and prekindergarten in the same entity are highlighted in green.

State	Child Care And Development Block Grant (CCDF) Lead ⁴⁹	Head Start Collaboration ⁵⁰	State Pre-K ⁵¹	Home Visiting (MIECHV) ⁵²	Part C (IDEA) ⁵³ <i>PART B [State Education Agency]⁵⁵</i>	RTTT-ELC ⁵⁴
Alabama	Dep't of Human Resources	Dep't of Children's Affairs	Dep't of Children's Affairs (Office of School Readiness)	Admin. for Children and Families	Dep't of Rehabilitation Services	Did not apply
Alaska	Dep't of Health & Social Services	Dep't of Educ. & Early Development	Dep't of Educ. & Early Development	Dep't of Health & Social Services	Dep't of Health & Social Services	Did not apply
Arizona	Dep't of Economic Security	Dep't of Educ.	No state-funded program	Dep't of Health Services	Dep't of Economic Security	First Things First
Arkansas	Dep't of Human Services	Dep't of Human Services	Dep't of Human Services, in partnership with Dep't of Educ.	Dep't of Health	Dep't of Human Services	Dep't of Human Services
California	Dep't of Educ.	Dep't of Educ.	Dep't of Educ.	Dep't of Public Health	Dep't of Developmental Services	Dep't of Educ.
Colorado	Dep't of Human Services	Office of the Governor	Dep't of Educ.	Dep't of Public Health & Environment	Dep't of Human Services	Dep't of Human Services
Connecticut	Dep't of Social Services	Dep't of Educ.	Dep't of Educ.	Dep't of Public Health	Dep't of Developmental Services	Dep't of Educ.

Key: = SEA oversight = Oversight includes SEA

⁴⁸ See *Building an Early Learning System: The ABCs of Planning and Governance Structures*, BUILD, Dec. 2004.

⁴⁹ See *CCDF Grantee State and Territory Contacts*, U.S. Dep't of Health and Human Services (Admin. for Children & Families), Office of Childcare, <http://acf.hhs.gov/programs/occ/resource/ccdf-grantee-state-and-territory-contacts> (accessed Nov. 6, 2012). In some states administration of CCDF is broken up among multiple agencies, with different agencies responsible for different aspects of the program.

⁵⁰ See *Head Start Collaboration Offices Directory*, U.S. Dep't of Health and Human Services (Administration for Children & Families), Early Childhood Learning & Knowledge Center, http://leclkc.ohs.acf.hhs.gov/hslc/states/collaboration/HSSCO/state_collaboration.html (accessed Nov. 6, 2012); *Michigan Executive Order 2011-8*, *supra* note 30.

⁵¹ See *The State of Preschool 2011: State Preschool Yearbook*, National Institute for Early Education Research, 2011.

⁵² See *Active Grants for Affordable Care Act Maternal, Infant and Early Childhood Home Visiting Program*, Health Resource and Service Administration, http://ersrs.hrsa.gov/ReportServer?/HGDW_Reports/FindGrants/GRANT_FIND&ACTIVITY=X02&rs:Format=HTML3.2 (accessed Nov. 6, 2012).

⁵³ See *State Part C Coordinators*, National Early Childhood Technical Assistance Center, <http://www.nectac.org/contact/ptccoord.asp> (accessed Nov. 6, 2012).

⁵⁴ The state agencies identified as governing the RTTT-ELC program are those agencies identified as the "lead agency" by each state in their applications except in the case of the grantee states, where updated information is provided. See *Race to the Top-Early Learning Challenge, Scores and Comments*, United States Department of Education, <http://www2.ed.gov/programs/racetothetop-earlylearningchallenge/awards.html> (accessed Nov. 6, 2012).

⁵⁵ U.S.C. 612(a)(11) ("State Educational Agency Responsible for General Supervision").

State	Child Care And Development Block Grant (CCDF) Lead ⁴⁹	Head Start Collaboration ⁵⁰	State Pre-K ⁵¹	Home Visiting (MIECHV) ⁵²	Part C (IDEA) ⁵³ <i>PART B [State Education Agency]⁵⁵</i>	RTTT-ELC ⁵⁴
Delaware	Dep't Health & Social Services	Dep't of Educ.	Dep't of Educ.	Executive Office of the Governor	Dep't of Health & Social Services	Executive Office of the Governor/ Office of Early Learning
District of Columbia	Office of State Superintendent of Educ.	Office of State Superintendent of Educ.	Office of State Superintendent of Educ.	Government of District of Columbia	Office of State Superintendent of Educ.	Office of State Superintendent of Educ.
Florida	Office of Early Learning (formerly Agency for Workforce Innovation)	Office of Early Learning	Office of Early Learning, in collaboration with Dep't of Educ. and Dep't of Children and Families	Dep't of Health	Dep't of Health	Office of Early Learning
Georgia	Dep't of Human Services	Dep't of Early Care & Learning (DECAL)	DECAL	Governor's Office of Planning & Budget	Dep't of Public Health (Office of Children & Youth with Special Needs)	DECAL
Hawaii	Dep't of Human Services	Dep't of Human Services	No state-funded program	Dep't of Health	Dep't of Health	Dep't of Human Services
Idaho	Dep't of Health & Welfare	Dep't of Health & Welfare	No state-funded program	Dep't of Health & Welfare	Dep't of Health & Welfare	Did not apply
Illinois	Dep't of Human Services	Dep't of Human Services	State Bd. of Educ.	Dep't of Human Services	Dep't of Human Services	State Bd. of Educ.
Indiana	Family & Social Services Admin.	Family & Social Services Admin.	No state-funded program	Dep't of Health	Family & Social Services Admin. (First Steps)	Did not apply
Iowa	Dep't of Human Services	Dep't of Educ.	Dep't of Educ.	Dep't of Public Health	Dep't of Educ.	Dep't of Educ.
Kansas	Dep't of Social & Rehabilitation Services	Dep't of Social & Rehabilitation Services	Dep't of Educ.	Dep't of Health & Environment	Dep't of Health & Environment	Dep't of Educ.
Kentucky	Dep't for Community Based Services	Governor's Office (Office of Early Childhood)	Dep't of Educ.	Dep't for Public Health (Cabinet for Health & Family Services)	Dep't for Public Health (Cabinet for Health & Family Services)	Governor's Office (Office of Early Childhood)
Louisiana	Dep't of Children & Family Services	Dep't of Social Services	Dep't of Educ.	Dep't of Health & Hospitals	Dep't of Health & Hospitals (Office for Citizens with Developmental Disabilities)	Did not apply

Key: = SEA oversight = Oversight includes SEA

State	Child Care And Development Block Grant (CCDF) Lead ⁴⁹	Head Start Collaboration ⁵⁰	State Pre-K ⁵¹	Home Visiting (MIECHV) ⁵²	Part C (IDEA) ⁵³ <i>PART B [State Education Agency]⁵⁵</i>	RTTT-ELC ⁵⁴
Maine	Dep't of Health & Human Services	Dep't of Health & Human Services	Dep't of Educ.	Dep't of Health & Human Services	Dep't of Educ.	Dep't of Educ.
Maryland	Dep't of Educ.	Dep't of Educ.	Dep't of Educ.	Dep't of Health & Mental Hygiene	Dep't of Educ.	Dep't of Educ.
Massachusetts	Dep't of Early Educ. & Care	Dep't of Early Educ. & Care	Dep't of Early Educ. and Care	Dep't of Public Health	Dep't of Public Health	Dep't of Early Educ. & Care
Michigan	Office of Great Start, Dep't of Educ.	Office of Great Start, Dep't. of Educ.	Office of Great Start, Dep't of Educ.	Dep't of Community Health	Office of Early Childhood Education and Family Services, Dep't of Educ.	Office of Great Start, Dep't of Educ.
Minnesota	Dep't of Human Services	Dep't of Educ.	Dep't of Educ.	Dep't of Health	Dep't of Educ.	Dep't of Educ.
Mississippi	Dep't of Human Services	Office of the Governor	No state-funded program ⁵⁶	Dep't of Human Services	Dep't of Health (Office of Child & Adolescent Health)	Dep't of Human Services
Missouri	Dep't of Social Services	Dep't of Elementary & Secondary Educ.	Dep't of Elementary & Secondary Educ.	Dep't of Health & Senior Services	Dep't of Elementary & Secondary Educ.	Dep't of Elementary & Secondary Educ.
Montana	Dep't of Public Health & Human Services	Dep't of Public Health & Human Services	No state-funded program	Dep't of Public Health & Human Services	Dep't of Public Health & Human Services	Did not apply
Nebraska	Dep't of Health & Human Services	Dep't of Educ.	Dep't of Educ.	Dep't of Health & Human Services	Dep't of Health & Human Services and Dep't of Educ.	Dep't of Health & Human Services
Nevada	Dep't of Health & Human Services	Dep't of Health & Human Services	Dep't of Educ.	Dep't of Health & Human Services	Dep't of Health & Human Services	Dep't of Health & Human Services and Head Start Collaboration & Early Childhood Systems Office
New Hampshire	Dep't of Health & Human Services	Dep't of Health & Human Services	No state-funded program	Dep't of Health & Human Services	Dep't of Health & Human Services	Did not apply

Key: = SEA oversight = Oversight includes SEA

⁵⁶ On April 2, the legislature voted to fund a state pre-k program, ending Mississippi's status as the only state in the south that does not fund a state pre-k program (Senate Bill No. 2395). The governor signed the bill on April 18, 2013 (<<http://billstatus.ls.state.ms.us/2013/pdf/history/SB/SB2395.xml>>).

State	Child Care And Development Block Grant (CCDF) Lead ⁴⁹	Head Start Collaboration ⁵⁰	State Pre-K ⁵¹	Home Visiting (MIECHV) ⁵²	Part C (IDEA) ⁵³ <i>PART B [State Education Agency]⁵⁵</i>	RTTT-ELC ⁵⁴
New Jersey	Dep't of Human Services	Dep't of Educ.	Dep't of Educ.	Dep't of Health & Senior Services	Dep't of Health & Senior Services	Dep't of Educ.
New Mexico	Dep't of Children, Youth & Families	Dep't of Children, Youth, & Families	Public Educ. Dep't	Dep't of Children, Youth, & Families	Dep't of Health	Public Educ. Dep't
New York	Office of Children and Family Services	Council on Children & Families	Dep't of Educ.	Dep't of Health	Dep't of Health	Office of Children and Family Services
North Carolina	Dep't of Health & Human Services	Dep't of Public Instruction (Office of Early Learning)	Dep't of Health & Human Services	Dep't of Health & Human Services	Dep't of Health & Human Services	Early Childhood Advisory, Office of the Governor
North Dakota	Dep't of Human Services	Dep't of Human Services	No state-funded program	Dep't of Health	Dep't of Human Services	Did not apply
Ohio	Dep't of Job & Family Services	Dep't of Educ.	Dep't of Educ.	Dep't of Health	Dep't of Health	Dep't of Educ.
Oklahoma	Dep't of Human Services	Dep't of Commerce	Dep't of Educ.	Health Dep't	Dep't of Educ.	Dep't of Educ.
Oregon	Dep't of Employment	Dep't of Educ.	Dep't of Educ.	Dep't of Human Services/ Oregon Health Authority	Dep't of Educ.	Dep't of Human Services
Pennsylvania	Office of Child Development and Early Learning (OCDEL), under Dep'ts of Educ. and Public Welfare	OCDEL, Dep't of Public Welfare	OCDEL, Dep't of Educ.	OCDEL, Dep't of Public Welfare	OCDEL, Dep't of Public Welfare	OCDEL, under Dep'ts of Educ. and Public Welfare
Rhode Island	Dep't of Human Services	Dep't of Human Services	Dep't of Educ.	Dep't of Health	Dep't of Human Services	Dep't of Educ.
South Carolina	Dep't of Social Services	Dep't of Social Services	Dep't of Educ. and South Carolina First Steps ⁵⁷	The Children's Trust Fund	South Carolina First Steps	Did not apply

Key: = SEA oversight = Oversight includes SEA

⁵⁷ The Board of South Carolina First Steps is "composed of the Governor and the State Superintendent of Education and twenty appointed members[.] . . . [including] [t]he Chief Executive Officer of each of the following . . . : Dep't of Social Services or his designee; Dep't of Health and Environmental Control or his designee; Dep't of Health and Human Services or his designee; Dep't of Mental Health or his designee; Dep't of Disabilities and Special Needs or his designee; Dep't of Alcohol and Other Drug Abuse Services or his designee; Dep't of Transportation or his designee and Budget and Control Board, Division of Research and Statistics or his designee." (<http://www.scfirststeps.org/legislation.htm>)

State	Child Care And Development Block Grant (CCDF) Lead ⁴⁹	Head Start Collaboration ⁵⁰	State Pre-K ⁵¹	Home Visiting (MIECHV) ⁵²	Part C (IDEA) ⁵³ <i>PART B [State Education Agency]⁵⁵</i>	RTTT-ELC ⁵⁴
South Dakota	Dep't of Social Services	Dep't of Educ.	No state-funded program	Dep't of Health	Dep't of Educ.	Did not apply
Tennessee	Dep't of Human Services	Dep't of Educ.	Dep't of Educ.	Dep't of Health	Dep't of Educ.	Did not apply
Texas	Child Care Services, Workforce Development Division, Texas Workforce Commission	The Children's Learning Institute (part of the Texas State Center for Early Childhood Development)	Texas Educ. Agency	Health & Human Services Commission	Dep't of Assistive & Rehabilitation Services	Did not apply
Utah	Dep't of Workforce Services	Dep't of Workforce Services	No state-funded program	Dep't of Health	Dep't of Health	Did not apply
Vermont	Dep't for Children & Families (Agency of Human Services, Child Development Division)	Dep't for Children & Families	Dep't for Children & Families and Dep't of Educ.	Agency of Human Services	Dep't for Children & Families	Dep't for Children & Families
Virginia	Dep't of Social Services	Dep't of Social Services	Dep't of Educ.	Dep't of Health	Dep't of Behavioral Health & Developmental Services	Did not apply
Washington	Dep't of Early Learning	Dep't of Early Learning	Dep't of Early Learning	Dep't of Early Learning	Dep't of Early Learning	Dep't of Early Learning
West Virginia	Dep't of Health and Human Resources	Dep't of Health & Human Services	Dep't of Educ.	Dep't of Health & Human Resources	Dep't of Health & Human Resources	Didn't highlight lead
Wisconsin	Dep't of Children & Families	Dep't of Public Instruction	Dep't of Public Instruction	Dep't of Children & Families	Dep't of Health Services (Children's Services Section)	Dep't of Children & Families
Wyoming	Dep't of Family Services	University of Wyoming/ Wyoming Institute for Disabilities (linked to Dep't of Family Services)	No state-funded program	Dep't of Health	Dep't of Health	Did not apply

Key: = SEA oversight = Oversight includes SEA

IV. Discussion and Recommendations

For our analysis, we interviewed key leaders inside and outside government in several of the states that have made governance changes or have a consolidated governance structure.⁵⁸ From those interviews and existing literature, we distilled some key decision principles to inform state decisions about governance options. Those decision principles are summarized here. We analyzed key values that need to be addressed in any structure, identified advantages and challenges of particular structures, and noted some cross-cutting issues that states will have to address regardless of which model they choose.

A. Decision Principles

1. Values to be Addressed in Any Structure

State contexts are different; each state serves different populations, responds to different challenges, and has a unique blend of values, traditions, legal obligations, and political climates. What works in one state and for one governance purpose may not work in another state. Thus, a state that desires to reexamine its early childhood governance structure should not necessarily begin with a particular model in mind but rather with a focus on its early childhood goals and the functions to be served by governance. Clarity regarding desired functions and outcomes is a foundational step for determining which governance structure will work best for the state.⁵⁹

“When thinking through the options, the state should be realistic about its capacity to significantly revise its governance structure and deliver desired results.”



⁵⁸ List of interviewees in the appendix.

⁵⁹ *Generally Vision to Practice*, *supra* note 5

In weighing its options, the state further should consider the foundational values of governance and determine which governance model, given the state's particular context, will best advance those values. As discussed earlier in this paper, cross-cutting values that an early childhood governance model should strive to reflect include coordination, alignment, sustainability, efficiency, and accountability. Once the state has had an opportunity to examine and fully understand its specific context, its goals for early childhood, and the foundational principles of good governance, the state can turn to an examination of existing governance models – coordination, consolidation, and creation. When thinking through the options, the state should be realistic about its capacity to significantly revise its governance structure and deliver desired results.⁶⁰ A key component of capacity will be the governor's support for early childhood goals, particularly where the state is considering governance changes that likely will require gubernatorial participation.

Traditionally and today, many states employ coordinated governance models. This model aims to place funding and authority for separate early childhood programs and services in the government agencies and offices that have the substantive and technical expertise to oversee them. States that maintain coordinated governance must strive to break down silos within the broader early childhood system that create inefficiencies and incoherence. For any governance model, sustainability requires some level of formality; states that have governance structures based primarily on informal relationships likely will find it harder to sustain coordination and coherence through various transitions.

2. Considerations in Consolidation or Creation

A trend in recent years has been for some states to move from coordinated governance to models of consolidation or creation. Several theories about effective governance help explain this shift:

⁶⁰ *Id.*

- First, coordination and alignment may be substantially improved by having multiple programs and services under one roof. For example, communication between different programs and services in the field is made easier – so long as the governance entity actually does the communications and consensus-building work to achieve the values of cohesion and alignment.
- Second, consolidation and creation models also may be better for aligning accountability with governance authority, rather than maintaining separately accountable entities for separate programs and services.⁶¹
- Third, both consolidation and creation models create higher-level positions within early childhood (e.g., commissioner, deputy commissioner), which may assist the state with attracting better talent and making early learning leaders more visible within government.
- Fourth, consolidation and creation models require changes at multiple levels of agencies, including the senior leadership, middle management, and line staff. These combinations are unlikely to be successful if they do not lead to significant changes at every level – which may take time.

Finally, combining program governance is often expected to reduce duplication of efforts and lead to greater efficiency.

Ultimately, where a state aims to move from coordinated governance to a model of consolidation or creation, the effective implementation of key governance practices will be key – and undoubtedly will result in some growing pains.⁶²

a. Choosing Between Consolidation and Creation

When choosing between consolidation and creation, the state should consider issues such as impact and sustainability. For example, would an existing agency (like the SEA) or a separate standalone agency with its own leadership have more clout over time? How do small agencies fare in advancing policy and program goals, and garnering resources to support those goals? For certain states, this dynamic will be

⁶¹ *Governing American Early Care and Education*, *supra* note 4 (important to align entity's authority with accountability functions).

⁶² It is worth noting that states that have adopted consolidated or created governance models experienced disproportionate success in the federal Early Learning Challenge. Two of the three states (Massachusetts and Washington) with standalone early childhood agencies and three states with early childhood in the same agency (California, Maryland, and North Carolina) were among the nine first-round Early Learning Challenge grantees.

affected by the fact that certain state agency chiefs are separately elected. Pennsylvania chose a hybrid model that takes advantage of some of the benefits of creation and some of the benefits of consolidation. The political calculus will differ from state to state, depending in part on the state's constitutional structure as well as its political climate.

In some states, leaders or advocates have focused on consolidation because they believe creation is politically impossible, at least in the short term. It is true that many of the advantages of consolidation and creation are similar, so that it may be possible to achieve some of the benefits of creation without creating a new agency. If, in the long run, creation would in fact be the best option for the state, a consolidated office could potentially serve as the basis for a spun-off independent agency at some point in the future – so choosing consolidation as a short-term strategy does not necessarily close the door on a long-term creation strategy. We believe it may be appropriate for states interested in the benefits of creation to choose consolidation if creation is not possible, and also that states should not assume that creation is superior to consolidation in the long term.

If a state chooses consolidation, it should consider the potential disadvantages of having the consolidated office of early learning administered at too low a level within its host agency. One of the benefits that only creation provides is creating



a commissioner-level leader, focused solely on early childhood, who can be a voice for the community in the state's political community. In some instances, consolidation creates a high-level leader within the host agency, who may serve some of the same public functions as a commissioner-level leader. If the early learning office is helmed by a mid-level administrator, however, it may be unlikely that its leader will have significant political standing.

b. Considerations in Consolidation

A central decision for consolidation will be determining into which existing agency early childhood governance should be placed. A state considering consolidation should examine the missions and goals of its existing agencies to seek coherence and alignment of objectives with its early childhood system. Consolidation will require significant stakeholder input and commitment from leadership, and the state should assess the dynamics of existing agencies to determine the best fit. The state should seek an agency where the commissioner or chief is prepared to be a leader in the early learning community, and agency staff will embrace early learning as a core part of their mission, rather than an appendage.⁶³ During a transition, buy-in from existing agency leadership and staff is vital given the issues implicated by a merger of authority into an existing state agency.

States focused on early learning as a strategy for improving educational outcomes may be interested in consolidating governance in the state education agency. The SEA already is committed to educational outcomes, and consolidation of early childhood governance into the SEA can ensure a continued focus on early learning – including improving the educational content of child care programs – and may aid in greater coherence of the continuum of early childhood and K-12 education, particularly in developing policy areas like learning standards and teacher professional development. On the

other hand, early learning programs historically have focused on a broader range of developmental domains than elementary and secondary learning, and the state would want to ensure that the connection between early learning and K-12 strengthens both kinds of learning rather than weakening one or the other.

Of course, the state education agency is not the only possibility for consolidating authority. Other states have consolidated structures based in the human services agency, which can provide a different set of advantages. For example, state education agencies may not be well equipped to work with the diverse set of community providers that form the core of many state early learning communities.

A state considering placement of early childhood governance in the SEA should examine the political dynamics of the SEA and the governor's office. States that separately elect the chief for the SEA should consider the degree to which the governor and a chief with constitutional independence can coordinate efforts. Consolidating authority in an independent SEA can have both advantages and disadvantages; it can help insulate early learning programs from governors who do not support them, but it can also reduce the level of gubernatorial interest in the programs – which can be a disadvantage in the state budget process.

“ A central decision for consolidation will be determining into which existing agency early childhood governance should be placed.”

c. Challenges in Transition

In our interviews with state leaders in states that have gone through consolidation efforts, and in the existing literature about standalone state agencies, there is an important theme that comes through: the transition from a multi-agency governance structure can be hard, but generally, leaders in the states that have made the transition claim that the results more than justified the effort. Leaders who lived through transitions have offered strategies for ensuring that transitions go well, but have indicated that even the best-planned realignments are extremely difficult.

⁶³ *Id.*



However, their strong overall sentiment has been that the benefits of bringing program administration together means that the long-term benefit makes the short-term challenges worth it.

While this paper does not offer a comprehensive blueprint for managing a transition, we share here some lessons learned from states that have been through it:

- There should be specific strategies for managing operations (and expectations) both for any state employees moving to a new agency and for personnel in the field who will interact with the consolidated or created agency. All need to be prepared for the move, and then supported in the wake of the move, both of which take time and resources. The preparation and support will need to address both mechanical and cultural components of the change.
- There are a host of administrative issues that will need to be addressed in any change. Different agencies typically have different IT systems, salary structures, and accounting practices and other issues that will need to be worked out. Even with excellent planning, these issues can create bumps in the road, some of which will affect the larger field. For

example, even if providers are inclined to support the philosophy of a consolidated agency, they will have a hard time supporting it if the agency's transitional difficulties include late payments to service providers.

- In many states, funding streams – particularly preschool and child care funding streams – are not designed to work well together. In those states, providers utilizing both funding streams often struggle to utilize them both effectively. A change in governance requires the state to rethink existing funding streams, and redesign them as necessary to make them more user-friendly, aligned, and efficient.
- In addition to infrastructure and critical administrative supports, there can be cultural issues. Employees changing agencies are understandably likely to experience stress about the change, and have to adapt to a new set of cultural norms. This is particularly true if the consolidation or creation is meant to facilitate a new philosophy toward program implementation – for example, an increased focus on the learning aspects of child care.
- States should be thoughtful about what programs are a part of the change. Child care and preschool have been a focus of both consolidation and creation efforts, but there are a host of other programs that might benefit from inclusion in a change. Special education programs (including both Part B and Part C) and the Head Start collaboration office are among the units that might benefit from a closer connection to preschool and child care programs. If professional development supports are housed outside of core program funding, they may need to be transferred as well. Expanding the scope of a potential consolidation or creation effort may make it more politically difficult, but may also increase the state's operating efficiencies.
- This also raises the important issue of programs for infants and toddlers, such as home visiting. State preschool generally focuses on children ages three and four, as does Head Start. These children are also easier to serve in child care settings than infants and toddlers. As the table in III.D shows, home visiting and Part C frequently are run by

agencies other than those administering child care and preschool. Consolidating or creating early childhood programs focused on three- and four-year-olds without including infants and toddlers may serve to further isolate supports focused on the youngest children. In deciding on a governance structure, states should pay careful attention to the needs of infants and toddlers and ensure that any changes will leave infants and toddlers at least as well off as they were before – and preferably better.⁶⁴

⁶⁴ The programs that reach infants and toddlers may be considered “family support” initiatives and have a more explicit two-generation focus than programs for older children. This has implications for where they are housed currently in state government, and how they might be included in a new early childhood division or agency.

These issues are among the most important issues that states will need to address if they want a governance transition to operate smoothly and have positive long-term impacts.

B. Analysis

1. Advantages and Disadvantages of Governance

Model Options

Each of the three governance structures discussed in this paper – coordination, consolidation, and creation – have strengths and limitations. The following table identifies potential benefits and challenges of each governance model based on the five values of governance discussed in this paper:

Governance model option	VALUES				
	Coordination	Coherence	Sustainability	Efficiency	Accountability
1. Coordination	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> - Difficulty in making decisions of mutual concern - Potential for lack of trust among actors - Lack of clear authority to make key cross-cutting decisions 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> + Matches program administrative responsibility with each agency’s mission - Tension between programmatic missions – e.g., those that focus on child care as parental work support and those that view early child care as educational service 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> + Avoid need to fund new centralized data system + Avoid programmatic disruptions that would occur if programs were reorganized (staff, resources, infrastructure costs) - Poor budget visibility - Greater potential for agenda conflicts - Greater potential for stakeholder fragmentation, making it harder to mobilize key leaders and energize the advocacy community 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> - Bureaucracies, disconnected programs with siloed funding and programming - Duplication, poor coordination of services, and inconsistent program direction - Difficulties sharing data - May take longer to address key issues due to infrequency of meetings and need for consensus 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> - Possibility of receiving lower priority among other programs that more directly align with agencies’ core missions - No single agency or executive accountable for success or failure - Conflicting standards applied by leaders in different agencies

Governance model option	VALUES				
	Coordination	Coherence	Sustainability	Efficiency	Accountability
1a. Coordination Led By a Formal Structure Within the Governor's Office	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> + Facilitates interagency collaboration and cooperation (including, e.g., agreements to streamline monitoring/auditing) by placing oversight within one office - Relies on willingness of agencies to cooperate and collaborate, which may be a particular challenge when one or more agencies are independent of the governor under the state's constitution or laws 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> + Establishes entity with mission focused exclusively on early childhood issues + May help establish unified budget and goals for education - May not have the standing or power to bring about coherence 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> + If well positioned, can attract effective leadership - Potential to be highly influenced by political party 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> + May improve efficiency of operations by establishing a single point of contact that can eliminate redundancies - Additional costs to create entirely new office, reorganization of staff and resources - Adds another level of bureaucracy and oversight 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> + Office can serve as a mechanism for accountability of agencies + May elevate awareness of issues among policymakers (higher statewide profile) - May lack sufficient authority to compel action



Governance model option	VALUES				
	Coordination	Coherence	Sustainability	Efficiency	Accountability
2. Consolidation	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> + Facilitates collaboration and cooperation and combining of major administrative and policy functions + May create the leadership needed to drive change 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> + Promotes a unified vision + Integrated infrastructure and consistency in regulations and policies + Alignment of policy, planning, service delivery, and supports + Easier to create unified performance goals and metrics, and then achieve those goals + If authority placed with the SEA, may be more likely that child care will include a focus on kindergarten readiness - Will lack effectiveness if agency staff treat early learning as an appendage of their mission, rather than core part 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> + After transition costs, ongoing operating costs may be held steady or reduced + Provides a focal point for generating stakeholder support and engagement + If the vision and implementation get off-track, may be easier to restructure than a standalone agency - Other parts of the agency might seek to use early childhood funding streams to support agency infrastructure needs - Potential mission conflicts with other areas of the agency 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> + Prospect for streamlined technology system + Facilitates combining separate databases and resolves data sharing issues + Requires less infrastructure to move the work ahead + May improve the efficiency of staff time usage by the removal of turf barriers, including reducing interagency conflicts - Implementation costs and short-term disruptions as programs, staff, and resources are transferred - May require significant shifts in way providers are trained, supported, and rewarded 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> + Having a single lead agency may make it easier for stakeholders to hold the agency accountable, and may also create more aligned accountability across funding streams - Existing agencies may not have a primary mission of managing early childhood programs that are provided by a mix of public and private providers



Governance model option	VALUES				
	Coordination	Coherence	Sustainability	Efficiency	Accountability
3. Creation	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> + Facilitates collaboration and cooperation and combining of major administrative functions + May create leadership needed to drive change - Creates need for all new patterns of any cross-agency coordination and collaboration 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> + Integrated infrastructure and consistency in regulations and policies + Alignment of policy, planning, service delivery, and supports + Cultivation of values to drive leadership and governance + Mission focused exclusively on early childhood issues - May fragment existing services previously based on service needs rather than age (e.g., health, special education, and child welfare) - Potential appearance of conflict of interest with same agency charged with ensuring centers meet minimum licensing requirement and with ensuring availability of services 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> + Opportunity to balance interests and intent and engage public support to provide durability to system + Harder to reverse if legislative action is needed to create the new agency - Learning curve - Small agencies may lack standing and influence in executive and/or legislative branches 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> + Prospect for streamlined technology system + Facilitates combining separate databases and resolves data sharing issues + May allow for the combination of monitoring and professional development systems in a manner that creates spending efficiencies and programmatic consistency - Unraveling decades of complexity with preexisting governance structures - Implementation costs and short-term disruptions as programs, staff, and resources are transferred; similarly, may require significant shifts in way providers are trained, supported, and rewarded - Could increase overall state costs if entity has to establish new finance, personnel, and legal services units 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> + Potential to elevate profile of early childhood education among policymakers + Clear, visible lines of authority - Focus on internal governance work of building new structure can lead to neglect of external tasks

2. Cross-Cutting Issues

A state's choice among coordination, consolidation, and creation and consequent administrative changes may impact broader state issues and initiatives, including its early childhood advisory council (ECAC) and any regionalization or privatization efforts.

a. *Early Childhood Advisory Councils*

First, a state should consider how its ECAC fits within a larger governance structure. The ECAC's coordinator role fundamentally is strategic and advisory; authority and responsibility do not lie with the ECAC. As such, regardless of the governance structure selected, a state should consider what role the ECAC will play and what functions it can serve. Because ECACs generally serve a coordinating role across the early childhood system, they may be well-attuned to the coordinated governance model. On the other hand, consolidation or creation into a single lead agency with which to engage may make the ECAC's work easier. Then again, a shift to consolidation or creation could make the ECAC's role a bit unclear.

When ECACs operate effectively, they can provide valuable support to agency administrators.⁶⁵ However, a shift in state administrative roles – and potentially an elevation of the prominence of one agency's leaders – will affect the role of the ECAC. While in some states ECACs play a significant role in coordinating among agencies, a governance change can eliminate the need for some of that role, and change the dynamic among agencies. In some instances, it may make sense for an ECAC to evolve into an advisory

group primarily focused on meeting the needs of a consolidated or created agency, but in other instances, the ECAC may add value by helping to coordinate the work of a newly strengthened or created agency with other state agencies. Because under federal law ECACs are ultimately accountable to governor's offices, the governor's office should take the lead in defining the ECAC's role in a newly changed governance landscape, applying general principles of successful ECAC operation⁶⁶ to the state's new structure.

b. *Regional or Decentralized Models*

Next, states may have regional or decentralized structures in their governance of early childhood programs and services. Empowering local decision-makers within their communities may help to elevate awareness and support of early childhood issues among policymakers and provide greater visibility among relevant groups statewide. Use of regional entities also acknowledges different contexts and needs within the states' regions. At the same time, states must ensure access to and equity of early childhood services and consider the potential for unclear accountability in regional or decentralized models, particularly where consistency in practice is key to service provision.

Our interviews and analysis do not focus on the benefits and drawbacks of decentralized models, but rather on whether particular state administrative models are more or less effective at working with regional entities. One clear theme that emerged in our interviews was that the quality of interaction between the state government and regional governments was far more dependent on the quality of people involved than on the specifics of the administrative structure. While interviewees generally believed that consolidated or created structures could in some instances attract better talent, interviewees also believed that the quality of this interaction is heavily dependent on capacity at the regional level, which may be beyond state control.

⁶⁵ See Regenstein, *State Early Childhood Advisory Councils*, Build Initiative, 2008, p. 7.

⁶⁶ *Id.*





c. Engaging Private and Philanthropic Partners

Finally, a state should consider the interplay between its governance model (whether coordinated, consolidated, or created) and any privatization efforts or public-private partnerships. For example, having a consolidated or created entity to oversee the early childhood system may make engagement with private and philanthropic partners easier. Having a clear lead agency for an early learning agenda can help philanthropies understand where their giving is most likely to be effective. It also can provide the opportunity to bring together multiple sectors of the philanthropic community to act in a more coordinated manner; for example, a consolidated or created administrative structure may be able to bring together funders from the education, social services, and health fields (depending on the agency's overall ambit.)

i. Public-Private Partnerships

Public-private partnerships around comprehensive early childhood services have been created at the state level in at least 20 states.⁶⁷ While these partnerships vary in their scope, funding, and responsibilities, they are generally focused on advancing public policy and investment around early education, health, and family engagement. They are characterized by having strong connections between the state and local communities

and work together to support a coordinated continuum of services statewide. Their responsibilities typically include cross-sector state and local planning; on-going communications work; coordinated action and decision-making; use of data for continuous improvement; advocacy and mobilization of state and community leaders; and fundraising from both business and philanthropy.

While the state and local aspects of a public-private structure can take several forms (a non-profit partnership, public agency, council, or other entity), the state and local structures formed can enable information to flow from families and communities to the state and allow funds and technical assistance to flow to communities and families for the services that best address their needs. Together, the state and local communities can use data and accountability measures to set standards and improve services in response to changing needs and evolving research, and to deliver services in a cohesive rather than fragmented way.

Whether a pre-existing structure of partnerships is used or a new structure is planned, careful consideration should be given to the relationship between the public-private partnership and the other components of a comprehensive early childhood system. A state should consider the interplay between its governance model (whether coordinated, consolidated, or created) and the public-private partnership at the state and local levels. If a new governance structure is established, a key part of the advance planning must be development of the roles and responsibilities of both the new governmental structure and the public-private partnership and the expectations about how they will interact.

ii. Engaging Philanthropic Partners

Even if the state is not creating a public-private partnership, it may be wise to engage philanthropic partners in a governance transition. One strategy suggested is to engage philanthropic stakeholders in the process of managing a governance transition. The benefit of this kind of engagement is that there are some discrete costs in transition that the philanthropic community can help bear, including convening stakeholders and other one-time analyses that state government might be unable to provide. This early

⁶⁷ E.g., *Backgrounder: Public-Private Partnerships*, *supra* note 23.



V. Conclusion

In the last decade, a number of states have made ambitious governance changes that involve creating new agencies focused on early childhood programs and services for children from birth to age four, or consolidating multiple early childhood programs into the same agency. These governance structures can offer multiple benefits, but states that have been through the process have emphasized that the transition is not easy. States considering a possible governance change should evaluate their existing leadership and capacity, and determine whether a governance change is likely to significantly improve how the state meets key values in governance like coordination, coherence, sustainability, efficiency, and accountability; if the benefits outweigh the costs of transition, a change may be appropriate.

engagement can help the philanthropic community shape and understand the new administrative structure, which can allow it to operate more effectively post-transition. The engagement of the philanthropic community also can take the edge off of dialogues about conflicts of interest, as philanthropies may be able to take positions without appearing to be motivated by financial self-interest. This can help make the transition smoother and more effective, which can benefit the entire field.

While there are potential benefits to philanthropic engagement, it is not guaranteed to go well. In certain contexts, early engagement with philanthropic stakeholders might complicate any governance transition -- particularly where these stakeholders have strong and perhaps conflicting ideas. For philanthropic engagement to be successful philanthropists must understand the limitations of their role, and government leaders must define an appropriate role for philanthropy that allows the partnership to be effective.

Interviewees emphasized that the key determinant in this relationship is the quality of people involved, and the willingness and ability of state government leaders to engage productively with the philanthropic community. In states that consolidate early learning programs into a larger agency, this will likely require the personal engagement of the agency head.

“ Interviewees emphasized that the key determinant in this relationship is the quality of people involved, and the willingness of state government leaders to engage productively with the philanthropic community.”

And states considering governance changes at this time can engage in peer-to-peer learning with other states that have made governance changes. These efforts will require deliberate and thoughtful work; changing the governance structure without addressing the need for coordination, alignment, sustainability, and efficiency will result in little more than cosmetic modifications, with ineffective programmatic silos maintained within the new oversight structure. Ultimately, the critical question is whether a governance change will lead to improved outcomes for the young children who need them most – and an increasing number of states believe that the answer to that question is yes.

Appendix A

Interview subjects

Joan Blough, *Michigan Early Childhood Investment Corporation*

Susan Broman, *Michigan Department of Education*

Karen Cadigan, *Minnesota Department of Education*

Rolf Grafwallner, *Maryland Department of Education*

Camille Maben, *California Department of Education*

Clinton McSherry, *Maryland Family Network*

Scott Moore, *Early Edge California*

Abby Thorman, *Thorman Strategy Group*

Megan Waltz, *Minnesota Department of Health*

About the Authors

Elliot M. Regenstein leads the Ounce of Prevention Fund's national policy consultation practice and coordinates its overall state and national policy efforts. Regenstein was previously a partner of EducationCounsel LLC, providing legal, policy, strategic planning and advocacy services to governments, foundations and nonprofit organizations across the country and at the federal level. Regenstein was one of the chief architects of Illinois' 2006 Preschool for All program while serving in the governor's office as director of education reform. Regenstein co-chaired the Illinois Early Learning Council from 2004 until April 2009 and currently serves as a member of the Council's Executive Committee, co-chairing its Data, Research and Evaluation Committee. He holds a law degree from the University of Michigan Law School and a Bachelor of Arts in History from Columbia University. Regenstein joined the Ounce in 2012.

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About the BUILD Initiative

The BUILD Initiative helps states create comprehensive early childhood systems – coordinated, effective policies that address children's health, mental health and nutrition, early care and education, family support, and early intervention. BUILD's vision is at the center of an emerging and vibrant state-based policy movement in the early childhood development field. We work with those who set policies, provide services and advocate for our youngest children to make sure that they are safe, healthy, eager to learn and ready to succeed in school.



www.buildinitiative.org

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