

Community Empowerment Lean Design Event Summary 2009

Why a Review of Community Empowerment?

When Community Empowerment was created 12 years ago, Iowa was on the forefront of developing a state-community partnership to building early learning systems. The Lean Event allowed for the opportunity to reflect and build on what works in Iowa while developing new models and strategies based on the latest early childhood research.

During recent legislative sessions, questions regarding the efficiencies and effectiveness of Community Empowerment at both a state and local level often became a focal point. The Iowa Department of Management proposed to members of the legislature to host a Lean Design Event for Community Empowerment. Lean is about continuous improvement. The intent of this event was about making a good system better.

How was the Lean Event conducted?

On May 18, 2009, a diverse representation of state and local early childhood stakeholders came together to develop a scope and objectives for the week-long Lean event.

Purpose:

“This event will define Empowerment’s role in a world class early care, health and education system at a state and local level, to help young children and their families be successful.”

Objectives:

1. Improve efficiencies at the state level
 - Examine the capacity of the state Technical Assistance (TA) team to support the local boards
 - Examine the current involvement of mandated state agencies and the level of integration within their agencies
 - Determine how to engage other state agencies’ involvement
2. Improve efficiencies at the local level
 - Examine structure of the Community Empowerment Areas
 - Revisit Community Empowerment’s role as a convener and coordinator of early childhood services
 - Ensure each Community Empowerment Area knows the needs of their constituents
3. Find a balance between maximizing flexibility at the local level and meeting state level requirements, including but not limited to, fiscal, quality and legislative.
4. Clarify Community Empowerment’s role, responsibilities and relationships within the larger system, ie; Early Childhood Iowa
5. Establish consistent performance accountability for the services provided in Community Empowerment Areas.
6. Examine governance structure to identify opportunities to support coordination and integration of:
 - Preschool services
 - Family support services
 - Child care services
 - Child health services
7. Examine the branding of “Community Empowerment”
8. Identify hindrances to the system’s success
9. Examine structure for state funding and make suggestions to the Legislature if necessary
10. Ensure the Empowerment structure provides local areas with the tools and support needed for good fiscal accountability

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The Community Empowerment Lean Team met the week of June 15-19. Facilitation was by Jim Scott with TBM Consulting Group from Durham, NC. Mr. Scott has facilitated Lean events in Iowa state government for over five years. Staffing support was provided by Mike Rolf from DOM and Susan Godwin from DHS. The group addressed the objectives and developed a proposal around four priority areas.

A Summary of Activities that Occurred as part of the Process:

The original proposal from the Lean Team was shared in July, 2009 following the week-long event in June. Workgroups were formed to address Levels of Excellence, Redefining Local Empowerment Areas, State Structure and Marketing. Representation of the Lean Team and the workgroups is shared at the end of this report. Each workgroup was charged with reviewing the input received, developing details for the recommendations and refining any recommendations based on input, fact-finding, etc.

To provide clarification and receive input to the process, regional meetings were conducted in Iowa City and Winterset. Lean Team and Community Empowerment Technical Assistance team members also met with communities upon request. Updates were provided about the process on a monthly basis. Information was also included on the state empowerment website.

http://www.empowerment.state.ia.us/about_us/lean_activities.html

What Are the Recommendations?

Based on a statewide perspective to strengthen Iowa's early care, health and education structure, the Lean Design Team recommendations include:

- Replace current re-designation process with a 'levels of excellence' rating system that allows for more recognition of each level of achievement.
- Implement criteria for geographic boundaries for local empowerment areas.
- Create a more-unified state structure that combines the efforts of Iowa Community Empowerment with Early Childhood Iowa.
- Create a branding name for the efforts to build Iowa's early care, health and education system that will resonate with the all that come in contact with this work.

What are the Next Steps?

The Lean Team and the workgroups accomplished the assignments they were given. This final summary serves as a compilation of the recommendations and the work of the Lean Team and the workgroups formed. To support these recommendations, draft legislative language has been provided to the Governor's Office.

Additional detail and specifications will be necessary in order to implement strategies once legislation is adopted. It will be the responsibility of the Early Childhood Iowa Board to move the work forward at that point.

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Levels of Excellence

A tiered system will be established for local empowerment areas to work towards higher levels of quality. The current system identifies each area as either being in compliance by a designation or a conditional designation. The new rating system would offer specific criteria for reaching a new level of performance. It will replace the current designation process.

- Emerging – describes areas that are meeting basic compliance
- Capacity building – describes areas that are meeting basic compliance but in addition are meeting higher level criteria.
- Model – describes areas that are meeting all of the criteria for emerging and capacity building but are meeting higher level criteria.

The group has considered consequences for poor performing areas (pre-emerging) that would be needed for this process to be implemented.

Proposed Timeframe for Levels of Excellence would be to be included in 2010 legislation but be implemented on a pilot basis in the fall 2010 and officially in 2011. If this occurs, the legislation would allow the Board the authority to add flexibility with categorical funding to local areas based on meeting the highest level.

Re-defining Empowerment Areas

The overarching goal which was developed at the Lean Design event is to reach 30-38 Community Empowerment Areas. Criteria to support this goal include:

Criterion #1: A local CEA consist of no more than 4 counties.

Rationale:

- When the area is larger than 4 counties, there is a concern that the geographical distance becomes an issue, for travel of volunteer board members, families and the coordinator.
- The ability to engage all partners and funding sources.

Criterion #2: Single-county areas must have a child population (ages 0-5 years) greater than 5,000.

Rationale:

- The number of children applies to single-county areas only. While the input of placing a minimum number of children on all areas was discussed, there was potential for areas to be too large geographically due to the population difference of rural and urban counties in Iowa.
- It is realized that there has to be a cut-off. Many figures were considered but when looking at the population numbers across the state, the goal of 38 total areas or less, the ability to make a difference with the funding and issues related to planning and administration, 5,000 seemed to be a good fit.

Criterion #3: Based on the ability of an area to meet all the criteria, any CEA can choose to redefine their boundaries.

Rationale:

- The original criterion was that no current multi-county CEA would be split. The idea was to impact as few areas as possible. However, based on the input received, this change allows more flexibility to the local areas.

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Criterion #4: All Community Empowerment Areas must have contiguous county borders.

Rationale:

- This is based on the reality of geography.
- If programs are shared it is usually between counties that share a border.

If supported through legislation, the group further recommends that a waiver to those boards that merge allow any carry forward allowed by local boards stay with the newly-merged board. Proposed timeline for the local structure recommendation includes legislative language in 2010 and full implementation by July 2012.

Marketing

As part of the Lean Design Event, the Marketing Group was formed to evaluate the name and branding of Community Empowerment.

Over the past 12 years, the State Technical Assistance team has heard that the name “Community Empowerment” does not accurately reflect what this statewide program really is. There also has been confusion between Iowa’s early childhood system’s state structure (Early Childhood Iowa or ECI) and the local structure (Community Empowerment).

The Marketing Group is recommending that both the state and local structure use the same name, Early Childhood Iowa. Local areas will be referred to as Early Childhood Areas (ECAs). It was also determined that ECI would need a new “tagline” to encompass both the state and local structures. The Marketing Group is currently seeking input to determine the new ECI tagline.

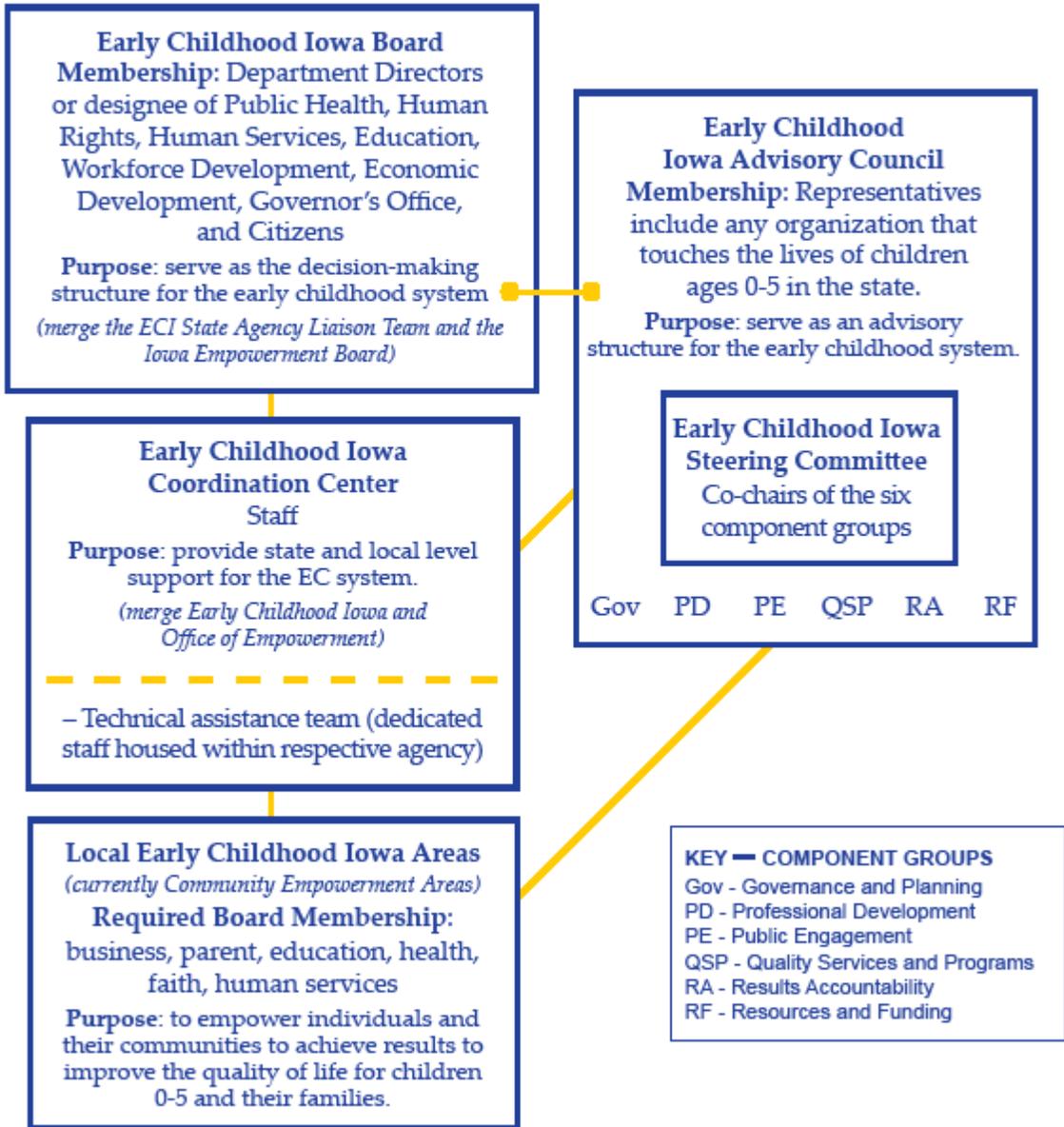
State Structure

The state structure of Community Empowerment (and the Early Childhood Iowa system) will be reorganized in an effort to increase efficiency. The goal is to create one unified early care, health and education system in Iowa. This early care, health and education state structure can result in a model for streamlining and aligning existing councils, boards and commissions, thus eliminating the need for the continued creation of new councils, commissions, and boards. The primary recommendation focuses on the blending of Early Childhood Iowa (ECI) and Community Empowerment. The proposal would be included in 2010 legislation for implementation in December 2010.

Below is a depiction of the proposed state structure.

Early Childhood Iowa

A SYSTEM of SYSTEMS



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Who Assisted with this Effort?

The Lean Team consisted of persons from a diverse background of state and local early childhood stakeholders. The members include:

- 5 Community Empowerment area coordinators;
- 7 members of the state technical assistance team;
- 2 State Representatives;
- 5 representatives of not-for-profit organizations;
- 2 state agency representatives that represent partnerships with Community Empowerment;
- 1 member of the Iowa Empowerment Board;
- 1 local service provider;
- 2 members of the Legislative Services Agency; and
- State department directors, state representatives, staff from the Governor's Office and legislative caucus staff also provided input during a part of the event.

Workgroups were formed for Levels of Excellence, Local Structure, State Structure and Marketing. Representation included members of the original Lean Team and were expanded with other interested persons. See below for representation:

Levels of Excellence:

- 8 Community Empowerment area coordinators;
- 1 Department of Human Services member;
- 1 member of the Iowa Empowerment Board;
- 2 members of the state technical assistance team;
- 1 not-for-profit organization; and
- 1 state representative

Local Structure:

- 4 Community Empowerment area coordinators;
- 4 members of the state technical assistance team;
- 4 members of not-for-profit organizations;
- 1 member of the Legislative Services Agency;
- 2 members of the Iowa Empowerment Board;
- 1 former state legislator; and
- 1 current member of the Iowa Legislature

State Structure:

- 3 Community Empowerment area coordinators;
- 2 members of the state technical assistance team;
- 4 members of not-for-profit organizations;
- 2 current members of the Iowa Legislature;
- 2 local Empowerment Area Board members;
- 3 members of the Iowa Empowerment Board;
- 2 members of state agencies that work with Community Empowerment;

Marketing:

- 3 members of the state technical assistance team