

## ECEAP EXPANSION BRIEFING

As an important contributor to DEL's bold goal of *90% of five-year-olds ready for kindergarten by 2020, with race and family income no longer predictors of success*. ECEAP is moving ahead on several fronts to ensure effective and high-quality implementation of ECEAP expansion across the state. This brief describes the purpose and progress of the Think Tank and ECEAP *Expansion Plan* designed to guide this work.

### ECEAP EXPANSION THINK TANK

1. **CHARGE AND MEMBERS.** To grapple with the challenges and seize the opportunities of ECEAP expansion, DEL created the 40-person ECEAP Expansion Think Tank, which is currently planned to be in place from March 2017 through December 2019. The Think Tank and its work groups provide a way for DEL to seek insights and advice from stakeholders across the state about ECEAP expansion through: quarterly meetings; work groups; and, "between meeting" communications. Members include current and potential contractors, subcontractors, and partners working in different settings, such: as higher education; OSPI; child care centers; family child care homes; K-12 schools; ESD's; rural and remote providers; Child Care Aware; parents; and, advocates.

Through the Think Tank, DEL and members explore how our state can best:

- ☐ Build upon and expand ECEAP's current strengths and capacities.
  - ☐ Identify ways to recruit and prepare new contractors and subcontractors.
  - ☐ Create a strong system of high-quality ECEAP services in mixed-delivery settings.
2. **WORK GROUPS.** Think Tank work groups are convened as needed. The Contracting Work Group is exploring contracting processes, methods, and relationships to achieve statewide coverage and required contractor and subcontractor capacities (See section 4 below for specifics). Four short-term work groups have also met to develop individual readiness pathways for: child care centers; family child care homes; K-12 schools; and, rural and remote communities. A work group for the K-12 implementation pathway and another for communication and outreach will be convened in the next month. [Note: See section 1b below for work to develop a tribal pathway.]

### FIVE PRIORITIES

The Think Tank began by helping to develop an *ECEAP Program Theory of Change* and three "maps" of elements that must be in place to enable ECEAP expansion: sufficient **facilities**; an ample highly-capable **workforce**; and, the means to provide the **right slot in the right place**.

The maps delineated: steps to achieve success; actions for providers, DEL and system partners; and, the system and policy development needed to advance each element. Work is now underway on five priority areas drawn from these maps. Updates on these priorities are noted below (*expected completion dates are in noted parentheses*).

1. **PROVIDER PATHWAYS.** Provider pathways of the steps and actions necessary to enable different types of providers to deliver high-quality ECEAP services have three elements: engagement, readiness and implementation.
  - A. **Engagement and Readiness Pathways.** Think Tank work groups have helped to create draft readiness pathways for licensed child care and family child care homes, K-12, and rural and remote providers. These pathways articulate what is needed to tailor policy, practice, and supports so that we can engage and prepare more of each type of provider to participate in a strong RFA response and to deliver high-quality ECEAP services (*under review by DEL*). Early actions to be taken over the next six months have been drafted and work plans for each are being developed.
  - B. **Implementation Pathways.** Implementation pathways, as described below, are also being explored and developed. It is envisioned that the implementation portion of provider pathways may include consideration of variations to current policy and supports.
    - ☐ **Tribal Pathway.** Tribal communities are key partners to ensuring that ECEAP is accessible to Native American children. Sustaining ECEAP in tribal communities has



proven challenging for a variety of reasons. Rising incomes of some tribal families make some children who can substantially benefit ineligible for ECEAP. This diminishes our ability to reach DEL's 90% goal. In addition, DEL policies and timelines sometimes conflict with varying tribal structures, processes and policies across the 29 tribal communities, resulting in closure of tribal contracts. DEL ECEAP, in partnership with DEL's tribal liaison and the Indian Policy Early Learning Committee (IPEL) have convened an ECEAP Tribal Pathway work group to develop strategies to address existing tribal ECEAP barriers and challenges.

- ☐ K-12 Pathway. Because K-12 schools and ESD's comprise about 55% of ECEAP providers and have expertise in developing the facilities that will be needed, they are important ECEAP expansion partners. The standards alignment process calls for all ECEAP sites to become licensed. This will require supporting 177 current public school sites to become licensed. At the same time, schools are already highly regulated in areas that overlap with ECEAP requirements (e.g., use of TPEP to evaluate professionals, special education in combined classrooms, etc.). These issues create challenges to ECEAP expansion. A K-12 implementation pathway will be developed by DEL, OSPI and partners to recommend ways to maximize this source of expansion capacity. (*Completion - 6/30/18.*)
  - ☐ Child Care Center Pathway. Child care centers interested in providing ECEAP must achieve level 4 in Early Achievers, which creates a high bar for providers. Similarly, these often-smaller organizations cannot prospectively add staff, or change facilities on the possibility of getting a few ECEAP slots, so they may require a longer start-up period or other supports. For these providers and family child care homes, the different business model from typical ECEAP providers may create enrollment and cash flow obstacles since the business generally serves infant through school-aged children, making enrollment of ECEAP children for one or two years challenging. Prioritization of issues for a licensed child care center implementation pathway will be considered in the development of the 2018-2019 ECEAP Expansion Plan. (*Identification and completion of support actions – TBD.*)
  - ☐ Family Child Care Home Pathway. Family child care homes are confronted with issues similar to centers as well as additional barriers to successful implementation. Business models and capacities differ from other ECEAP providers, so there are some unique opportunities and barriers to ensuring their success. Different supports are needed and different economies of scale exist for these models. For example, the Spokane Family Child Care Home Pilot required .5 FTE of a Pre-K Specialist technical assistance over the last two years to prepare participating providers to deliver high-quality ECEAP services for 12 children to be served at 4 homes. (*Completion of cost overview for this pilot - 6/30/18.*) (*Identification and completion of support actions – TBD.*)
2. QUALITY IMPROVEMENT. Washington is one of four states participating in the Partnership for Pre-K Quality. The Bill & Melinda Gates Foundation provides funding for this work and the Ounce of Prevention provides technical assistance to the participating states (Washington, Oregon, and Tennessee).
- A. Self-Assessment of Preschool Quality. Through the Partnership, Washington is completing a *Self-Assessment of Pre-K Quality* (*Completion – 11/15/17*). Preliminary results show:
    - ☐ *Nine Areas of Strength*: Professional development provider qualifications; curriculum & assessment requirements; information in DEL data systems; quality assessment; contractor CQI; comprehensive services and family engagement; family access and outreach; teaching quality; and, child outcomes.
    - ☐ *Five Areas for Growth*: Instructional leadership/professional learning system; cultural competency/dual language learners; children with special needs in inclusive settings; data collection and analysis; and, educational requirements/ scholarships/compensation parity. (An intern will soon start work on strategies to strengthen dual language learning (DLL).
  - B. Next Steps in Quality Improvement. After finalizing the *Self-Assessment* (*Completion – 11/15/17*) DEL will identify leads for each area for growth. Then DEL and partners will work with the Partnership for Pre-K Quality to create improvement strategies and phase implementation to systematically improve our areas for growth. (*Timeline TBD.*)
3. WORKFORCE. Building the workforce is identified as a high-priority for ECEAP expansion by the Think Tank. The shortage of qualified staff is hampering expansion efforts. ECEAP slots are already being returned due to an inability to hire teachers in rural and other areas across the state. System-wide workforce development (child

care and ECEAP) is being led by DEL’s Professional Development Team with advice from the Early Childhood Workforce Council. This work is progressing on a longer timeframe. Early actions include formation of four work groups: compensation; equivalents, career pathways and community engagement. DEL is determining what equivalencies need to be addressed (Completion – 12/17). To start, the Equivalents Work Group will recommend a plan for working, certified elementary teachers who want to earn an ECE endorsement by December 2017.

4. **CONTRACTING AND STATEWIDE COVERAGE.** Achieving statewide coverage - with high quality services - through a manageable number of contractors is key to ECEAP expansion. The Think Tank’s Contracting Work Group has worked with the ECEAP Team to provide advice about streamlining contracting processes and tools working within the DEL/DCYF systems (*completed*). It is now exploring: roles that can best be performed regionally; contractor and subcontractor capacities needed to provide high-quality services; guidance regarding pass-through of funding to subcontractors; and, strategies to ensure statewide coverage in locations where there are few children or inadequate potential contractors or subcontractors ready. (*Completion – 6/30/18.*)
5. **FACILITIES.** Many new and renovated classrooms and spaces are needed by 2023 to support ECEAP expansion into an entitlement program. This is increased due to simultaneous ECEAP expansion and K-12 implementation of full-day kindergarten and class size reduction. Plans to act upon this as soon as the capital budget is passed are included in the *Enable Readiness and Expansion Action Plan (now under DEL review)*.

ESSHB 1777, passed in the 2017 legislative session, created the Early Learning Facilities Grant and Loan program. This program, to be operated jointly by the Department of Commerce and DEL, will provide grants and loans to ECEAP and other Early Achievers-rated providers in the system to support facilities development. When the 2017-19 capital budget was released, approximately \$14M was allotted to support this grant and loan program, but the capital budget has not yet passed. The program is critical to enable ECEAP expansion. Existing ECEAP contractors have reported that they are rapidly losing ground on available space to serve children in areas where need continues to exist. (*DEL is working with Commerce to plan and prepare for implementation of the grant program as soon as funds become available.*)

## ECEAP EXPANSION PLAN

Action plans for each of these priorities (tied to the *ECEAP Program Theory of Change*) are included in the draft *2017-2018 ECEAP Expansion Plan (completion -11/30/17)*. The *Plan*, which will be updated annually, is designed to maximize ECEAP’s contribution to the Department’s goal of 90 percent of Washington children being ready for kindergarten by 2020 and prepare ECEAP to become an entitlement program by the 2022-2023 school year, as mandated by state law.

ECEAP expansion into an entitlement program is one of four major changes ECEAP is now advancing. Other major changes include:

- ☐ Aligning and integrating standards with child care licensing and Early Achievers.
- ☐ Enhancing program quality through the Partnership for Pre-K Quality.
- ☐ Transitioning to the new Department of Children Youth and Families on July 1, 2018.

Since each of these changes will affect DEL-ECEAP staff and contractors, the *ECEAP Expansion Plan* encompasses administrative and program actions necessary to maintain and enhance current ECEAP services, enable readiness and expansion, and align and integrate programs.

**ADVANCING THE 90% GOAL.** The graphic to the right shows how ECEAP expansion priorities fit together to advance the goal of 90% of children being ready for kindergarten by 2020 with race and ethnicity no longer a predictor of success.

