

## Iowa Statistics:

**State Population**.....3,090,416

(2013 estimate)

**0-5 population**..... 6.4 %

(2012 estimate)

**Poverty level**.....12.2%

(2012 estimate)

**# of local collaboratives**.....39

### State/Local Collaborative

**Total Funding:**.....\$29 million

(FY 2014)

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## Early Childhood Iowa

Early Childhood Iowa (ECI) is a collaborative and comprehensive partnership, the mission of which is to create an integrated early care, health, and education system in Iowa that improves outcomes for children. It was founded on the premise that communities and state government can work together to improve the well-being of our youngest children. It is believed that individuals in local communities working together can identify and implement the best means for attaining desired results. The role of the state is to partner in support and facilitation of community responsibility - not to assume the directive role that the public has come to expect of government.

ECI was first approved by legislation in 1998 but was known then as Iowa Community Empowerment. In 2008, state partners came together and agreed to plan and work together under the banner of Early Childhood Iowa. A few years later, the local Empowerment collaboratives were renamed Early Childhood Iowa Areas.

Early Childhood Iowa's vision is *"Every child, beginning at birth, will be healthy and successful."* The founding legislation for ECI (then Iowa Empowerment) established five results to be achieved at both the state and local level and utilized the Accountable Government Act as the standard for measuring progress toward accountability. A result was defined as *"the effect desired for all Iowans."* The results described by the legislation are:

- Healthy Children;
- Children Ready to Succeed in School;
- Safe and Supportive Communities;
- Secure and Nurturing Families; and
- Secure and Nurturing Early Learning Environments.

State and local early childhood partners have adopted this vision and these intended results; they serve as the mission of Iowa's early care, health, and education system. ECI developed a strategic plan that serves as the single plan for Iowa's Early Childhood System, outlines the priorities and strategies for the system, and predicts the work of state agencies and public/private partnerships. The plan offers a framework to support the efforts of local and state level partners to coordinate, collaborate, and integrate efforts





that will lead to healthy and successful children. The plan, framed around the five result areas described in the legislation, was developed with input from various public and private stakeholder groups at the local and state level. The plan is a living, breathing document that is reviewed yearly to assess emerging issues. The ECI Strategic Plan and the ECI Framework, which serves as a marketing tool, can be found at [www.earlychildhoodiowa.org](http://www.earlychildhoodiowa.org).

## State Level Governance

The Iowa Department of Management coordinates ECI at the state level. This entity was chosen when Iowa Community Empowerment was first created because it was seen as a neutral department that could better play a convening role for the early childhood system than the Department of Human Services or Education. The “governance,” as written into [legislation](#), includes a governing board that is comprised of the heads of the Departments of Education, Workforce Development, Public Health, Human Services, Human Rights and Economic Development. In addition, the legislation mandates that the board will include 15 “citizens” who are appointed by the Governor and confirmed by the Iowa State Senate. Four members of the state legislature (2 senators and 2 representatives) also serve on the board in a non-voting capacity.

## State Level Funding

State funding for Early Childhood Iowa (and its predecessor, Iowa Empowerment) has continued since its inception in 1998. ECI has a budget of \$29 million in FY 2014 that was provided via a legislative appropriation.

Of that amount, \$350,000 is used to support state level operations and the remaining funds support local efforts. The \$29 million appropriation had generally been a mix of state and federal money until the FY 2014 appropriation. In FY 2014, for the first time, the legislature chose to draw the entire appropriation from state general funds, creating greater flexibility in how the funds can be utilized. Under the previous funding from the legislature, it was required that the federally funded portion be used for child care purposes. While high quality child care will remain a priority, a board committee is taking advantage of the greater options that are now available and looking at how to be more innovative in the use of the funding to allow for broader ideas to strengthen child care in the communities.

ECI funding designated for the local level is administered by local ECI boards and can be used to:

- expand home visitation and parent education;
- create quality improvement activities for child care and preschool providers, including professional development and training;
- increase the availability of infant, shift care and inclusive child care; and
- increase access to child care and preschools for children living in low income families.

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## State-Level Staffing

Three staff members within the Iowa Department of Management comprise the full-time staff for Early Childhood Iowa. Their job is to administer the funding allocated to the initiative to support state and local efforts and to provide technical assistance and training to local coordinators and boards. (One member of the staff is funded via the State Advisory Council grant received from the federal government. While that grant ended in 2013, other funding has been found to at least temporarily continue this position for another year or more.) In addition to the full-time staff, legislation also directs the six state agencies represented on the state board to designate staff, as feasible in their budgets, to work as a technical assistance (TA) team with the staff of the Early Childhood Iowa Office in the Department of Management. The role of the team is to provide coordination and other support to the state’s comprehensive early childhood system. In 2013, the

team consisted of representatives from the Departments of Education, Human Services, Management, and Public Health. The Departments of Economic Development Authority, Human Rights, and Workforce Development were unable to dedicate staff to this work due to limited resources.

## Advocacy

Since ECI is housed in government at the state level and funded with government funds, it is limited as to how much it can do in terms of advocacy efforts. Local ECI boards though are strongly encouraged to engage with their state legislators and to educate them as to the importance of the work they are doing to support young children and families.

Local collaborative staff noted that the only real challenge between the state and local staff may be the issue of advocacy, since the state level staff can only support the governor's early childhood policies. While that may be true at the state level, local communities *can* and *do* advocate with their own legislators on behalf of key early childhood issues. The lack of involvement by ECI staff at the state level may make local advocacy efforts rather cumbersome though since there is no state coordination. The state TA team can provide local collaboratives with tools but they cannot craft the advocacy messages. Every Child Counts, led by the Child and Family Policy Center, has lobbyists on staff who advocate for child and family issues. They provide some leadership and coordination that is helpful to local ECI boards and they send weekly emails during the legislative session that are helpful in keeping local leaders informed on legislation.

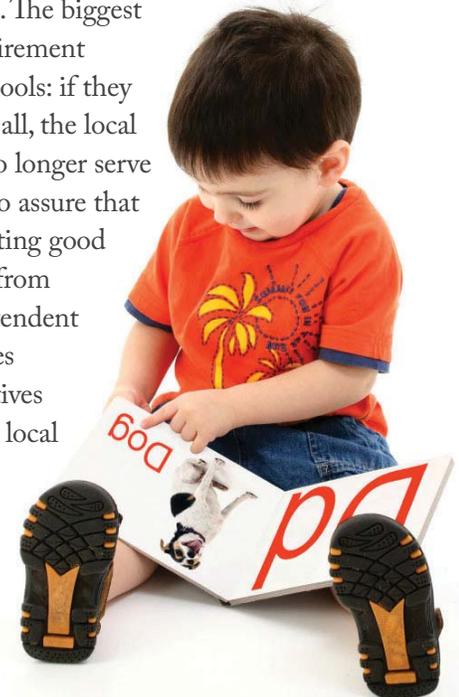
## Local Collaborative Overview

ECI was known as Iowa Community Empowerment when it was created by legislation in 1998 and launched in 1999. Local collaboratives were phased in via a competitive RFP process over a period of years. Once fully phased in statewide, there were 58 local collaboratives. That number has decreased to 39. This was due in part to a requirement by the state board that each local collaborative encompass a minimum population level. This was mandated in an effort to reduce the number of collaboratives and assure more effective use of resources and resulted in the merger of numerous smaller collaboratives. It is anticipated that there will be additional

mergers in the upcoming years as local boards continue discussions with neighboring collaboratives.

Each local collaborative has the option of being a 501(c)(3) or working through a fiscal agent. Seven collaboratives have chosen to operate as a 501(c)(3) and the rest are housed within county agencies or other entities, including nonprofits, foundations and the United Way. In legislation, they are designated as quasi-governmental entities. The geography of most local collaboratives follows county lines or encompasses a group of counties. The original legislation stated that a local collaborative could be as small as a school district. At the time, Iowa had more than 500 local school districts. With the state board population size requirement, that generally eliminated the option of being as small as a school district.

Like the ECI state board, the composition of the local boards is mandated through state legislation. Each local collaborative is required to have representatives from education, human services and health on their local board. This does not necessarily mean that a representative has to work for the local public health department but that they must have that type of experience. They are also required to have a consumer (parent, grandparent or foster parent) and to include faith and business community representatives. The size of local boards varies with the smallest, a board of seven and the largest, twenty. A new requirement, added in 2010, was that no board could have a member that worked for an agency that receives ECI funds. Previously the requirement had only been that a majority of the board members have no conflict of interest. This new mandate restricted who can now serve on the local board. The biggest outcry against this requirement came from the local schools: if they received any funding at all, the local superintendent could no longer serve on the board. In order to assure that local boards are still getting good input and involvement from leaders like the superintendent or a local human services director, local collaboratives have strengthened their local advisory groups with a goal of keeping these key leaders at the table. (Note: Reaction to



this requirement was mixed. Some local boards felt that it made the boards even stronger by codifying who could serve and helping eliminate potential conflicts. Others were against it, feeling it limited their ability to get greater buy-in/engagement from local agency leaders.)

Finally, the focus of the local collaboratives is to support existing local programs and services by filling gaps, often by allowing additional families/children to be served, or by increasing the quality of the services provided. As the coordinating body within their ECI area, it is the ECI Area Board's responsibility to pull the community together to collectively determine the strengths, gaps and needs of the families and young children served. The board then makes funding decisions that will impact the priorities determined through the strategic planning process.

## Local Collaborative Staffing

Local collaboratives may use a portion of their state program funding to support a part or full-time staff person to assist the local board. Not all local boards have a full time person or they may split their time between fiscal and program support. There is also administrative funding available at 3% of a local budget that may be used for other administrative costs, i.e., fiscal agent fees, liability insurance, audit costs, etc.

While not true in the early days of Empowerment/ECI, now all local collaboratives have at least one full- or part-time staff member. Not all staff works for the fiscal agent. Some staff members have a contract with the fiscal agent and they have someone else who is their employer. That is determined locally. Office space is another element that may vary. Most have office space but currently five local collaboratives do not. In those instances, the staff member may have been hired on a consultant basis and may work from home.

## Local Collaborative Funding

There are several funding formulas that are used to determine the allocation to the local collaboratives. Early in the history of ECI (when it was still known as Empowerment), the local collaboratives were phased in over a period of years. That ultimately created inequities in the funding, causing state leaders to create a new funding formula that would allow for statewide funding of the



local collaboratives and a more equitable balance in the allocations. As of 2013, ECI uses a three-pronged funding formula to allocate the majority of its resources across the 39 local collaboratives. This formula is based on:

- the region's 0-5 population;
- percentage of poverty among the 0-5 population; and
- a baseline amount that each collaborative receives as the third component of the funding formula.



While not true in the early days of Empowerment/ECI, now all local collaboratives have at least one full- or part-time staff member.

In FY 2014, Polk County (Des Moines area) received \$2.6 million, the largest allocation to a local ECI. The smallest allocation was \$440,000. This funding formula is updated annually, creating some real challenges for communities that may have fluctuations in population or poverty rates. These changes can result in funding cuts, which lead to cuts in staffing and program support. State leaders have begun to discuss the possibility of creating a base amount that the smallest local collaboratives would receive and which would not be impacted by changing demographics or the possibility of somehow stabilizing funding over a period of years. Until then though, local collaboratives remain at the mercy of the annual funding changes.

Of the \$29 million that is appropriated to support ECI local collaboratives, funding is broken down over three categories - family support, preschool support and child care. Under the FY 2014 appropriation, \$15 million must be used for family support programs, such as home visiting or parent education. The law requires that at least 60% of all ECI funds go towards a home visiting model. In actuality, the statewide aggregate is well over that amount.

Under the second category, preschool support, ECI funding must be used to support access for children that meet the definition of high need. To that end, local collaboratives often fund programs and strategies that support both access and affordability for children of families identified as high need. Iowa currently has a voluntary preschool program but, due to limited funding, it does not cover all children. As a result, a segment of the ECI funding at the local level frequently goes for scholarships for pre-kindergarten programs and also support for such needs as transportation. As an example, one local collaborative blends funding and fills program gaps through collaboration with a local Head Start that did not have adequate resources for transportation for all children. The local ECI collaborative funded an expanded number of slots in the local Head Start and additional funds for transportation costs. That same local collaborative also funded wrap-around care for children in the program and provided similar support to Iowa pre-kindergarten programs.

Approximately \$6.3 million was allocated in FY 2014 for the third funding category, child care. This category encompasses a range of strategies. While it is feasible for local boards to fund a child care assistance program, state leaders discourage them from doing so, preferring instead that they think more innovatively about how to assure that children with high needs are able to access high quality programs. There is also funding used to improve the quality of early childhood programs beyond child care.

## Technical Assistance to Local Collaboratives

As previously noted, a technical assistance (TA) team at the state level, comprised of representatives from the Department of Management and six other state agencies, provides support to local collaboratives. Much of this technical assistance occurs via phone calls, email, on-site visits, quarterly local coordinator meetings and annual reviews. The TA Team has also created an online [toolkit](#) that is regularly updated to provide information and resources to local coordinators and boards.

From the very beginning, the TA team hosted quarterly in-person meetings with local staff or board members (if there was no staff). Now that every local board has at least part-time staff in place, the local collaborative coordinator is invited to attend the quarterly meeting

in order to create greater synergy among the local coordinators and to better target technical assistance in these meetings.

The TA team also regularly hosts bi-monthly webinars that are targeted to both local staff and board members and uses webinars, skype and conference calls with board members to help them with a particular issue. Most trainings are now done via webinars rather than in-person. The TA team finds that this method is equally effective and reduces expense and time constraints. Despite the emphasis on technology in providing training, TA team members still regularly go to local board meetings to provide direct technical assistance and to facilitate strategic planning.

In addition to the state-level coordinated efforts, local staff holds regular regional meetings. These are organized by the local coordinators, not the state staff. Sometimes state staff is invited and sometimes not. This is left to the discretion of the local collaboratives.

The TA team's activities in the past year included:

- Development of the procedure and training for ECI area boards regarding the annual audit required of ECI areas, in collaboration with the Fiscal Accountability Work Group of the state board.
- Completion of the first round of reviews for the Levels of Excellence rating system, the designation process for ECI area boards.
- Targeted technical assistance to ECI area boards that are merging in order to meet the new legislated requirements for ECI area boundaries.
- Assistance in the consistent interpretation of the common program performance measures for all ECI funds.
- Leadership roles within the ECI component workgroups and the Stakeholders Alliance to move the system forward.
- Movement toward the design of a unified data system that supports state early learning and development goals for children





and families, in collaboration with the Department of Education, the objectives of the Early Childhood Advisory Council grant and other early childhood partners.

- Meetings with ECI area boards to address specific questions regarding legislation and best practice for operations.

When local staff was asked about the technical assistance and support provided to them by ECI staff at the state level, it was noted: “They share expectations and requirements and are in touch almost weekly. We know we can call on them whenever we need them. They come to visit and do trainings for us. They come to local board meetings if board members have issues they want to work on. There is a real feeling that we are all on the same team at the state and local level, that we all have the same purpose. We feel very supported by state staff.”

## Local Collaborative Snapshot – Dubuque County Early Childhood

The local ECI for Dubuque County covers just the County of Dubuque. It was created in 1999 in the second year of ECI funding. The state classifies the county as urban but it is unique in that, while it has the City of Dubuque, it also encompasses a large rural population and borders two other states. Although it does not serve children and families in neighboring Illinois and Wisconsin, it works with child care providers from the neighboring communities in those states, as some live in other states but actually work in Dubuque County, Iowa.

Dubuque County Early Childhood is a 501(c)(3) – one of only 7 local initiatives with a 501(c)(3) status. While they have achieved the nonprofit status, their primary funding is their ECI state allocation. They have some

other grants but they are minimal by comparison. In the most recent “Level of Excellence” rating by ECI, Dubuque County Early Childhood received the highest rating – that of “Model.” For many years, the local board was administered solely by volunteers and there was no staff. Staff was hired in 2002 and it has made a critical difference in the community collaboration and in supporting the board in its strategic planning and funding decisions.

Among the programs funded by Dubuque County Early Childhood are:

- Parents as Teachers;
- Health services through a local visiting nurse program;
- Child care nurse consultants;
- Oral health screening that focuses on at risk preschoolers.
- CCR&R programs that serve child care providers, including consultants who work to improve quality in family child care homes and child care centers;
- Preschool scholarship program;
- Quality improvement grants;
- Child care training programs;
- Child care health and safety grants; and
- A variety of other supports.

Through Clarke University’s Nursing Department, the local collaborative funds a community health program. Nursing students visit families that are getting ready to have a baby or have just had a baby. Typically, the program serves 60 families at a time and, as a result of the collaboration with Clarke University, there are no staff costs. The cost is only \$2000/year and is a program that local leaders are excited about in terms of the return on investment.

Local leaders noted that there is strong bipartisan support for ECI in Dubuque County and that it has historically been that way. This is influenced strongly by the great collaborative spirit within the community. Local leaders noted that: “Collaboration was the model from the very beginning at the state level and that influenced our work at the community level. The leadership took the time to build support from a variety of state departments and we then got support from their expertise. They really complement each other. We don’t just have one perspective. We have a variety of perspectives on how best to build early childhood systems. Building ECI on that concept of collaboration trickles down so when we work

on system building in our community, we take the same approach. We have the same history at the local level of working with a lot of partners for the same purpose. It's not just saying we're both working on the same projects. Instead, it's about saying how we are alike and different. What are our goals? What strategies are we using? How can we think about how we work together? That's the example that has been set for us at the state level and that is the example we follow at the local level."

” The Dubuque County Early Childhood Board sees itself as a strategic planning and policy board for early childhood in its county.

state on their efforts to meet the performance measures but their data collection goes well beyond the state requirements. The local board uses their own data collection efforts to better understand the overall progress of its programs. Every other year, the board also looks at trend lines and overall progress and this is used in making funding decisions. While they have not made major changes in what they fund over the past years, they make changes within the programs themselves to get better results.

A key challenge for Dubuque County Early Childhood and likely for other local collaboratives is the ongoing push and pull of how much to spend on staff and coordination time. In 2008, the state budget was cut and this impacted ECI as well. For Dubuque County, that meant a reduction of one-third of its budget and a cut in staff from three people to just one person. This cut in staff and program dollars also meant that it had to significantly scale back its systems building efforts in the county, as there was simply not enough staff to address all the early childhood needs in the community.

The Dubuque County Early Childhood Board sees itself as a strategic planning and policy board for early childhood in its county. To that end, when there are funding cuts or increases, it developed a “Cycle of Continuous Growth Chart” that is used for strategic planning. It sets its goals based on this cyclical approach. As they evaluate programs, local leaders continually look back at the strategic plan and indicators reflected in the chart, ask themselves what the data is telling them, and use that information to make final funding decisions. They also work closely with their community partners and continually think about how the Birth – Age 5 piece fits into the Birth – Age 20 piece. Even though their dollars are tied to 0-5, they want to understand and anticipate the longer term impact of the services. They also think about how early childhood ties to the long-term economic success of their community and state. They use that message in discussions with community groups and employers.

In making funding decisions, consideration is also given to the state's performance measures that all local ECIs are required to target. They collect data to report to the

One of the successes of which they are most proud and that is reflective of the community collaboration they have developed in Dubuque County is their Quality Child Care Alliance. It has been in place for six years and was started with the goal of looking at accessibility to quality child care. It started with 60 child care providers and community partners that focused on a strategic plan for quality child care and is now one of the standing committees of Dubuque County Early Childhood. This group has:

- developed its own local definition of what quality child care is;
- established a definition of quality for Family Friend & Neighbor care; and
- created a model of a quality rating system before Iowa had its own. (When the state created its own quality rating system, Dubuque County altered its model to support the state effort.)

One component that the Quality Child Care Alliance had planned to emphasize was the need to create demand in parents for quality child care. Over the years though, that has been a challenge. As Sherri Edwards, Dubuque County's local coordinator, noted, “Parents have to believe





that they have their children in a good place or they wouldn't leave them there. Does that mean that their child care program is quality? Not always. Giving parents the information AND the ability to choose and to afford it is an ongoing challenge.”

Another challenge at the local level is trying to retain optimism and confidence. A great deal of examination and work needs to take place to ensure the support of children 0-5. There are many evidence-based programs they would like to employ but how do they balance the dollars to get the most positive results? As Ms. Edwards noted, “It's one thing to fund an after-school program but what is the long-term benefit of that versus the grants we give to child care providers to create more infant slots? Finding the balance to support long term gains is tough, particularly with limited dollars. It is a lesson and an ongoing challenge to look at what we want to do and to understand the real value in comparing them. This issue is really challenging for board members that want to do everything and want change to happen quickly. It takes time.”

In summarizing her perspective on the work through Dubuque County Early Childhood, Ms. Edwards stated, “We play well together. We have in our community a serious commitment to families and we have many nonprofits working on that. We are able to come together and have those community meetings and discussions even when we have a different philosophy. Our community is a supportive one and willing to work together and support each other's efforts. As an organization, our goal is to be a good community partner. We don't have to be the lead on every project. We're happy to just be invited to the table and to be a support system to other initiatives. We can't be a lead on everything and it benefits the community in many ways

when we all partner. If other communities look at it from that approach, it leads to ongoing success.”

## Performance Measurement

The Early Childhood Iowa State Board collects and reports statewide indicator data to quantify and track progress toward the statewide results. In 2011, the Early Childhood Iowa State Board adopted one set of program measures for Iowa's early care, health and education system, merging those previously tracked separately by Community Empowerment and Early Childhood Iowa. All programs now funded under the ECI appropriation are required to annually report their results using these program measures. The data is then compiled and shared from a state perspective in the ECI state [annual report](#).

ECI has also established a “[Levels of Excellence](#)” rating system for its local collaboratives. Under Iowa Administrative Code 249—1.4(256I), the ECI state board was given the responsibility to develop a levels of excellence rating system for local ECI boards. The rating system is the mechanism by which an area board is designated, and includes the following four levels: probation, compliant, quality, and model.

## Pros and Cons of the Model

### Pros

- Iowa has established a system that works from the community level up to the state level. Through this process, it is able to identify gaps and needs and allow the local boards to meet those local needs through planning and collaboration. This is the biggest strength.
- The funding is very flexible and does not have a lot of strings attached to it the way so many governmental funding streams do.
- Through this model, state leaders have built strong partnerships with both the local boards and the public and private partners at the state level. These partnerships have occurred as a result of Early Childhood Iowa. They did not exist when ECI/Empowerment was first getting started.
- There is greater public awareness of the importance of early childhood and the work that they are doing to support young children and families. Because the local boards are comprised of local citizens and community partners, awareness and understanding of the value of this work at many different levels has increased.

## Cons

- While funding is set aside to support the “infrastructure” at the state and local level, the reality is that Iowa has not been able to fund the state and community infrastructure to support this systems building effort to the extent needed. Without that infrastructure at the community level and support at the state level, it limits what communities are able to do. There simply is not enough staff and it cannot all be done through volunteers.

## Major Accomplishments

Iowa is a state that truly exemplifies the philosophy of “slow and steady wins the prize.” State leaders have been working steadily for more than 15 years since the development of Iowa Community Empowerment and the later evolution to Early Childhood Iowa. They steadily expanded the local empowerment boards to encompass the entire state and dealt with the funding issues that that entailed. Most recently, there has been a focus on improving the capacity and accountability of the local boards through their Levels of Excellence rating system. Iowa has learned numerous lessons along the way and made changes to its approach in response. It has implemented new initiatives, including state pre-K, a quality rating and improvement system and a family support state credential process, and incorporated those into their Empowerment/Early Childhood Iowa efforts. It has built a state-level collaboration that few other states can equal and all of its work really personifies that cross-agency collaborative approach. While there has not been huge growth in the funding for what has now become Early Childhood Iowa, it has maintained that funding through numerous economic downturns that impacted every state’s investment in early childhood. This has occurred as a result of the deep awareness and support for early childhood at the community level. Local citizens, partners, families, business and community leaders understand the importance of the Early Childhood Iowa efforts and support them through the work in their communities. Also essential to Iowa’s success has been the bipartisan approach state leaders have taken to building their early



Iowa is a state that truly exemplifies the philosophy of “slow and steady wins the prize.”

childhood system. This has not been a Democratic or Republican-led initiative. Both parties have been central to the longevity of the initiative, which was launched under Republican Governor Terry Branstad in 1998 and expanded under Democratic Governor Tom Vilsack and supported by both Republican and Democratic legislators. Few states in the country have been able to create and sustain such a bipartisan approach. It is a hallmark of the work in Iowa and young children and families have been the benefactor.

## Key Components to Success

- State level leadership that understands and values the importance of a system that is not always top-down is needed. For a system to be successful, it must be both top-down and bottom-up and it takes leadership to understand and support that ideal.
  - Bipartisan political support for an early childhood initiative is essential. Iowa early childhood leaders emphasized that approach from the very beginning so that both Democratic and Republican leadership in the state legislature and the Governor’s office felt ownership of the initiative.
    - Infrastructure at both the state and local level is essential. This cannot be done on a purely volunteer basis. Staffing is needed.
    - Provide as much flexibility as possible in local decision making and the use of funding sources that are flexible. An approach that is too restrictive and does not allow communities to customize the resources and programs to meet their unique realities will not be effective.
- Create conduits so that state agencies are bought in to the work.
- Build in the accountability/performance measurement of the work as early as possible. Expectations on the use of public dollars are high and it is important to show that accountability is built in from the beginning.
- Think from a community perspective, not from an organizational one – at the state and community level. Think in terms of the successes you can claim as a community or state, not as an organization. Keep that in mind in everything that you do.



## Lessons Learned

- While emphasizing flexibility and local decision-making, it also is important to clearly define the local collaborative roles and responsibilities, goals and objectives, etc. It can be problematic to later try to do this after the initiative is launched and local collaboratives are already established.
- Having funding at the state level that may have a targeted purpose (such as for a specific program) is okay but do not target everything. There needs to be some funding that targets local needs and is at the discretion of a local board. A cookie cutter approach at the state level, requiring every community to implement the same programs the exact same way, does not work. Setting aside resources that allow communities to respond to their individual needs and realities is essential to successfully building a statewide early childhood system.
- Focus on building relationships from the beginning – at the state and local level and between the state and local level leaders. Understand that it takes a while to build those relationships and put time, effort and resources into building them. Doing so will result in a stronger, more collaborative effort in the end.
- ECI is a new way of talking about government that is very different from anything that Iowa previously had. People did not understand how it worked. Make sure you allow the time you need to build relationships so that this new way of doing business is understood and fully supported by likely and unlikely partners.
- Think carefully about what is necessary to have in place to support a state/local initiative.
- Create a system of statewide performance measures to measure local performance early in the process. Iowa did not do that for the first seven years. Local boards

reported to the state as to how they used the resources and on general outputs, but nothing more. Even when the state requested data from the local boards, no parameters were given, so there was no way to compile a statewide data picture of the local ECI work. Going back and adding that component much later in the process is extremely difficult. From the very beginning, be aware of the purpose of what you are going to do and start collecting the data related to the local work.

## Interviews

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## Resources

- [Early Childhood Iowa website](#)
- [Early Childhood Iowa legislation](#)
- [Early Childhood Iowa State Board](#)
- [Levels of Excellence Rating System](#)
- [Early Childhood Iowa - State System Development](#)
- [Early Childhood Iowa Areas - Local System Development](#)
- [Local Collaborative Toolkit documents](#) and other [Local Tools](#)