

Early Head Start – Child Care Partnerships

Reaching More Infants And Toddlers With Quality Care & Learning

Early Head Start - Child Care Partnership (EHS-CCP) grants aim to incorporate the strengths of Early Head Start into other child care opportunities in order to expand access to high-quality care and learning for our youngest and neediest children. As a way to showcase and explore the positive impacts of the EHS-CCP grants, this resource profiles examples of three types of grantees: the state of Georgia, the Ohio State University, and the Mahube-Otwa Community Action Partnership's Early Head Start program in Minnesota.

Research shows that high-quality early childhood care and education is vital to closing the income and achievement gaps for children. Ensuring that children have a safe, reliable, high-quality care option allows parents to participate fully in the workforce, while also stimulating children's development. Despite the clear benefits of early learning, the high cost puts quality care opportunities out of reach for many families. The average cost of full-time center-based care is about \$10,000 a year — higher than the average cost of in-state college tuition in 33 states.¹ Early Head Start - Child Care Partnership (EHS-CCP) grants aim to expand access to high-quality care and learning for infants and toddlers in low-income families.

WHAT ARE EHS-CCPs?

EHS-CCPs allow new or existing Early Head Start grantees to partner with regulated center-based or family child care providers who agree to meet the Head Start Program Performance Standards. These partnership grants offer an innovative model that join the strengths of Early Head Start programs with those of child care providers to increase access to high-quality learning for children from low-income and working families. The partnerships maximize funding, while providing grantees autonomy, to ensure that as many children and families as possible are getting comprehensive services and high-quality learning opportunities.

Early Head Start (EHS) has a proven track record of providing quality instruction and comprehensive services to children and families. However, EHS lacks capacity, reaching only 7 percent of eligible children. Whether due to a lack of capacity in EHS or parental choice, many eligible infants and toddlers attend center-based child care programs or are cared for by family, friends, and neighbors in a home-based setting. These child care providers often offer more flexible operation hours, a year-round



schedule, and deep roots in their communities. Yet, many of these providers do not have the resources to offer the same services as EHS, such as comprehensive services for families and coaching and career advancement opportunities for their staff. EHS-CCPs bring together the strengths of both programs to enhance quality for all children in their care.

● **WHAT ARE THE BENEFITS OF EHS-CCPs?**

The EHS-CCP grants provide high-quality care for additional children and families, while also improving the early childhood workforce.



To ensure quality of care and learning for children, Early Head Start grantees work with other child care partners to help them meet the Head Start Performance Standards.² These standards set a high bar for care including developmental screenings and referrals for further medical, dental, and mental health services as needed. Families also have access to home visiting programs and engagement activities that support families in setting and meeting goals. In addition, the grants provide funding and support for wrap-around services to extend the school day/year in order to meet the needs of working families.

EHS-CCPs spur workforce development and improve resource sharing between grantees and partners. Through the partnerships, child care center staff and family child care partners receive additional training, professional development, networking opportunities, and peer learning and coaching. Another way that the funds help improve workforce quality is by improving employee compensation, increasing the capacity of facilities, and reducing class sizes. Additionally, resource sharing between grantees and partners can improve the physical learning environment through the purchase of new supplies, equipment, materials, and other facility improvement. Together, these improvements have allowed 32,000 additional infants and toddlers to access to high quality early learning.

The benefits of these partnerships extend beyond the children eligible for Early Head Start. Thanks to the EHS-CCPs, there are 3,900 EHS-CC classrooms with more than 7,800 additional children benefiting from the high-quality services that are part of the Early Head Start experience. Also, more than 8,000 teachers and staff are benefitting from the enhanced professional development, training, and coaching that the EHS-CCPs provide.

◆ **WHO ARE THE GRANTEEES?**

In 2015, 275 grantees were awarded \$500 million in competitive grants. Together, the grantees partnered with more than 1,400 local child care centers and 1,000 family child care programs to expand access to high-quality learning and care. The Department of Health and Human Services gave awards to



Together, these improvements have allowed 32,000 additional infants and toddlers to access to high quality early learning.

various types of grantees. These included individual Head Start programs, research universities, seven states/territories, and the District of Columbia. A majority of grantees, 72 percent, were private not-for-profit providers, and 87 percent of grantees had experience providing Head Start or Early Head Start programs previously. The variety of grantees highlight the potential for states and localities to leverage future partnership funding to meet their own needs.

■ WHAT LESSONS CAN WE LEARN FROM INITIAL GRANTEES?

Due to the diverse nature of the programs that were awarded the initial partnership grants, subsequent sections of this resource offer profiles of three different grantee types. These profiles seek to highlight effective and innovative uses of the EHS-CCP grants that ultimately strengthened programming for children and families. Each of the grantees profiled reported specific strategies for building quality relationships with their

partners and found ways to reduce the administrative burden through communication and resource sharing. Finally, these grantees found that utilizing technology, such as online credentialing and professional development, could ease numerous concerns while also improving the attendance and quality of trainings.

■ STATE GRANTEE PROFILE: GEORGIA

In Georgia, the number of children who are eligible for Early Head Start greatly outpaces the number of available spaces in Early Head Start programs. Georgia viewed their EHS-CCP grant as an opportunity to increase access for eligible children by building capacity for quality early learning. In the metro Atlanta area, EHS-CCP funded spots served 200 additional children in 2016. Prior to receiving the EHS-CCP grant, Georgia had prioritized reducing the administrative burden for partners and continued this commitment with the new grants.

In order to maximize their efforts, Georgia put together funds from other sources, like the Early Learning Challenge Fund, with their EHS-CCP grant. This allowed the State to further increase the number of high-quality early learning slots for eligible 3-year-olds. These efforts to build capacity will continue to pay dividends for the state in years to come, by allowing for further expansions.

In order to keep their commitment to low administrative burdens, Georgia created agency hubs to assist providers with administrative duties and tasks. Georgia used other innovative strategies to maximize their grants, such as utilizing their existing Quality Rating and Improvement System (QRIS) to determine potential partners who were best positioned to increase capacity. Georgia also implemented a family engagement strategy to ensure that families learned about the increased number of high-quality learning opportunities available through EHS-CCPs. The EHS-CCP grant allowed all of these efforts to be possible.



● **UNIVERSITY GRANTEE PROFILE: THE OHIO STATE UNIVERSITY**

Like other grantees, Ohio is home to a number of high-quality early learning programs, but lacks capacity to serve all eligible children. The Ohio State University (OSU), decided to apply for the EHS-CCP grant in order to help facilitate increasing access to high quality programming in Columbus, OH.

In the early phases of the EHS-CCP grant implementation, OSU used Ohio's QRIS as part of their partner selection. Using the QRIS allowed OSU to identify providers that were best suited to increase capacity, thus providing high-quality learning to more children. Like Georgia, OSU sought additional funding from various sources in order to support each organization's strengths and serve more children and families. Subsequently, OSU went on to leverage these additional resources as a way to maximize the strengths of each organization. For instance, with additional money given directly to the University, OSU was able to train community members interested in early childhood education to staff centers in their own high-need communities. This solution helped build capacity from within communities and quality in the early education workforce in areas already difficult to staff. These creative solutions and uses of resources allowed OSU to serve additional eligible children.

Like Georgia, OSU found solutions to perceived administrative burdens by building relationships with partners and building hubs for assistance. OSU reported that with strong relationships, providing assistance through hubs was both efficient and effective. The hubs allowed for assistance and professional development opportunities to be centralized, while also being responsive to needs of individual communities. Through creative solutions, OSU was able to support partners while also providing more eligible children with high-quality early learning opportunities.

◆ **EARLY HEAD START PROGRAM PROFILE: MAHUBE-OTWA COMMUNITY ACTION PARTNERSHIP**

Like other grantee profiles, Mahube-Otwa Community Action Partnership in Fergus Falls, Minnesota has more low-income children eligible for early learning and care than there are available. EHS-CCP grants allowed Fergus Falls not only to analyze need, but also identify what providers needed assistance with in order to meet Head Start Performance Standards.

Through the EHS-CCP analysis, Early Head Start was able to provide some of the critical technical assistance to partners to improve program quality and access. These partnerships have not only improved program quality, but also have meant that children and families have access to more screenings and expanded community services.

EHS-CCP grants have allowed Fergus Falls to reach more children, at a younger age, and provide access to high-quality early learning and care. These additional services are attractive to employees and employers. High-quality, affordable child care is a critical part of recruiting businesses and employees to a location. With child care often so expensive for families, cost and availability can be an important factor as businesses decide where to move. According to town officials, the additional child care options from EHS-CCP grants have improved the town's business prospecting. Employers and employees are excited to learn that there are high-quality, affordable child care options in Fergus Falls.



■ CONCLUSIONS

EHS-CCP grants offer a unique approach to maximizing the impact of federal funding to support expanded access to high-quality early learning environments for children from working and low-income families. In addition to benefiting children and families who receive child care subsidies, EHS-CCPs improve the quality of care for all children in participating sites.

EHS-CCP grants have provided 32,000 additional infants and toddlers access to high-quality early learning. The benefits extend beyond eligible children too. Thanks to EHS-CCPs, there are 3,900 EHS-CC classrooms with more than 7,800 additional children benefiting from the high-quality services that are part of the Early Head Start experience. Also, more than 8,000 teachers and staff are benefitting from the enhanced professional development, training, and coaching that the EHS-CCPs provide.

Participants in the initial cohort of EHS-CCPs found the flexibility of the grants allowed them to implement creative solutions to their specific concerns. Grantees like Ohio and Georgia used this flexibility to solve problems quickly and support child care workers and children. In future cohorts, the federal government might consider improving implementation by codifying and providing resources for grantees to overcome specific challenges. Overall, the EHS-CCPs offer an opportunity for increased access to quality care and learning.

FFYF advocates for increased support and funding to help address the needs of young children from low-income families and is committed to identifying opportunities that will result in more children accessing high-quality learning opportunities. FFYF has a plan to leverage public support for early childhood education and care, which includes building upon the investment in Head Start and the expansion of the EHS-CCP initiative, learn more on our website at www.ffyf.org.



Endnotes

¹ U.S. Chamber of Commerce: Leading The Way: A Guide For Business Engagement In Early Education https://www.uschamberfoundation.org/sites/default/files/Childcare%20Workforce%20Toolkit_April%202018.pdf

² Head Start Learning & Knowledge Center: Head Start Policy & Regulations <https://eclkc.ohs.acf.hhs.gov/policy/45-cfr-chap-xiii>