



The Early Childhood System Self-Assessment

[Building the Foundation for Bright Futures: Final Report of the NGA Task Force on School Readiness](#) offers three recommendations for what governors can do to build Ready States that have the leadership, infrastructure, and resources necessary to support families, communities, and schools in their efforts to ensure that all children enter school ready to reach their full potential. These are:

- ❖ Develop a vision and strategic plan for school readiness that considers the role of families, schools, and communities and that addresses the developmental needs of children beginning before birth to kindergarten and beyond.
- ❖ Build a comprehensive and coordinated statewide system for school readiness.
- ❖ Ensure accountability for results across agencies and between the state and local levels.

Action is already underway in many states to define and build a comprehensive and coordinated system of policies, programs, and services for children birth to age five. Across the country, states are engaged in early childhood systems planning initiatives, such as the Build Initiative, the Smart Start Technical Assistance grant program, the Early Childhood Comprehensive Services (ECCS) grant initiative, and the Assuring Better Child Development (ABCD) grant program. With such planning efforts well underway, many states are now on the cusp of significant systems change, but coordinating the different systems building blocks and charting a clear path of action can be challenging.

System building blocks commonly include elements of early care and education, children's health and nutrition, family support, and/or early intervention/special needs services. Within these system components, states are seeking to strengthen and align policies such as those related to governance, standards, research and development, financing, communications, monitoring, and provider/practitioner support. Specific state systems building plans vary according to the current policy and political landscape, existing resources, public and political will for systemic change, and other factors that are unique to each state.

The Early Childhood System Self-Assessment

The Early Childhood System Self-Assessment is a tool for states to examine their own efforts to date to design and implement a coordinated system of services and policies for children birth to age five. The Self-Assessment is a three part guided process that takes into consideration:

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Part I. Current Context the major investments, innovative policies, opportunities, and challenges to building a comprehensive system;

Part II. Current Early Childhood Systems Planning Efforts and implementation efforts already under way; and

Part III. Ready States Progress Indicators the extent to which the state has completed any of the Ready States recommendations of *Building the Foundation for Bright Futures: Final Report of the NGA Task Force on School Readiness*. States can use the results of the Self-Assessment to inform action steps necessary for achieving systems change.

When and if possible, we recommend that the self-assessment be completed by the governor's office, in collaboration with key stakeholders in the early childhood policy and professional community, as well as with others who have critical knowledge or perspectives to inform the state's response.

Part I. Current Context

Describe the current context of major early childhood investments and policy innovations, and identify potential opportunities and challenges to building a comprehensive system.

Part II. Current Early Childhood Systems Planning Efforts

Identify the early childhood systems planning efforts in which the state is currently engaged or has completed within the last three years. Use the seven guiding questions below for in considering each state initiative.

1. What are the goals and objectives of the system planning effort?
2. Who is involved (by title and affiliation), and what are their assigned roles?
3. What is the process for developing the plan and cultivating buy-in from key stakeholders (describe in brief)?
4. What are the major components of the systems plan, the identified action steps necessary to implement systems change, and projected timeline for achieving them?
5. What are the progress measures and results to date? (What has been implemented? What has not yet been implemented?)
6. What specific challenges, barriers, or opportunities have been identified that might impede or advance successful implementation of the plan?
7. What gubernatorial actions might successfully address these challenges or barriers or fully leverage these opportunities? What other public- or private-sector leadership actions would likewise contribute to successful implementation of the plan?
8. How do all of these efforts align with or compliment one another?

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Part III. Ready States Progress Indicators

Using the progress indicators below, measure the state's progress toward the Ready State recommendations in [Building the Foundation for Bright Futures: Final Report of the NGA Task Force on School Readiness](#). In addition to the progress indicators, where necessary detail a supplemental descriptions and explanation. These explanations might help to clarify progress on the specific activities listed or considerations that are important to the progress the state has made on other related activities.

The progress indicators on the following pages are intended to give a snapshot description of the progress made on current systems building efforts and activities. The progress indicators are defined as follows:

“Not applicable or not ready” Select this indicator if the described activity has no immediate relevance to the current context or activities in progress in the state. States might also select this indicator if the described activity is one the state would like to partake in, but currently other activities take higher priority, or other activities (listed or not listed) need to take place first before the this can be accomplished.

“Considering/planning” Select this indicator if the activity is in the discussion stage, data-collection stage, or team planning stage. This describes an activity that would take top priority if the opportunity were (or is) available, or the challenges/barriers to executing the activity were (or have been) removed.

“Implementing” Select this indicator if the described activity is currently underway, meaning substantial time and resources have been allocated to conducting this activity. Select “implementing” even if the activity is not being implemented to the respondent's full satisfaction or the effort includes some of the components described in the activity but not all. The degree of implementation can be specified further in the narrative response.

“Complete” Select this indicator if the activity described has been completed in full. If data, findings, or a final report was to result from the effort, these products have been provided or analysis is currently underway to deliver these products in the near future. The state should select “complete” regardless of whether necessary action steps resulting from the activity have or have not been discussed, planned, or implemented. Select this indicator even if this activity was not completed to the respondents' full satisfaction or if the effort included some of the components described in the activity but not all. If necessary, the way this activity would be completed differently by the respondent can be specified further in the narrative response.

“Other” The state can use this indicator to describe the status of the activity that is not described. For example, the described activity could have been completed, but it did not involve all the necessary stakeholders, or the findings from the activity could be obsolete due to changes in the early childhood context of the state. Select “other” when the indicators provided, even in conjunction with a narrative response, do not accurately reflect the status of this effort in the state. States are encouraged to provide an explanation for selecting the “other” category in the narrative response.

Recommendation 1: Develop a vision and strategic plan for school readiness.

Circle the indicator below that best describes the status of efforts dedicated to the following activities.

<i>Activities</i>	<i>Status Indicators</i>				
1. Existing structures: Indicate the current status of efforts to conduct a comprehensive review of existing federal, state, and local school readiness programs, policies, funding streams, and decision making structures.	Not applicable or not ready	Considering/ planning	Implementing	Complete	Other
2. Existing need: Indicate the current status of efforts to review demographic data on the number of children and families in need of early childhood services or supports.	Not applicable or not ready	Considering/ planning	Implementing	Complete	Other
3. System coordination: Indicate the current status of efforts to identify gaps, inefficiencies, duplication of efforts, and opportunities for leveraging resources.	Not applicable or not ready	Considering/ planning	Implementing	Complete	Other
4. Engage stakeholders: Indicate the current status of efforts to seek input from state, local, public, and private stakeholders on the vision, priorities, and recommendations for building an early childhood system.	Not applicable or not ready	Considering/ planning	Implementing	Complete	Other
5. Action steps: Indicate the current status of efforts to identify action steps necessary to implement systems change.	Not applicable or not ready	Considering/ planning	Implementing	Complete	Other
6. State plan: Indicate the current status of efforts to review the comprehensive state plan (or plans) to evaluate progress and realign goals and priorities over time.	Not applicable or not ready	Considering/ planning	Implementing	Complete	Other
7. Raise awareness: Indicate the current status of efforts to partner with public and private stakeholders to develop a strategic plan for raising awareness and building public and political will for school readiness among parents, voters, policymakers, and business and community leaders.	Not applicable or not ready	Considering/ planning	Implementing	Complete	Other

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Recommendation 2: Build a comprehensive and coordinated statewide system for school readiness.

Circle the indicator below that best describes the status of efforts dedicated to the following activities

<i>Activities</i>	<i>Status Indicators</i>				
1. Governance structure: Indicate the current status of efforts to address challenges of governing a comprehensive early childhood system.	Not applicable or not ready	Considering/ planning	Implementing	Complete	Other
2. Agency collaboration: Indicate the current status of efforts to implement mechanisms to encourage or require all agencies that administer programs and services for children to collaborate on policy decisions and coordinate services (e.g., formal memoranda of understanding or joint administrative authority over funding streams).	Not applicable or not ready	Considering/ planning	Implementing	Complete	Other
3. System standards: Indicate the current status of efforts to unify data collection requirements, training opportunities, and professional standards across prekindergarten, child care, and Head Start programs.	Not applicable or not ready	Considering/ planning	Implementing	Complete	Other
4. Funding strategies: Indicate the current status of efforts to provide new funding and/or leverage existing resources for system coordination efforts.	Not applicable or not ready	Considering/ planning	Implementing	Complete	Other

Recommendation 3: Ensure accountability for results across agencies and between the state and local levels.

Circle the indicator below that best describes the status of efforts dedicated to the following activities.

<i>Activities</i>	<i>Status Indicators</i>				
1. Goals and progress: Indicate the current status of efforts to establish goals and measure progress toward outcomes for children, families, schools, communities, and state systems.	Not applicable or not ready	Considering/ planning	Implementing	Complete	Other
2. Measure progress: Indicate the current status of efforts to use multiple measures to track progress toward: <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • system outcomes (e.g., evaluate progress toward integrating service delivery systems and adopting key policy changes); • program outcomes (e.g., evaluate program implementation efforts and track aggregate data from developmentally appropriate child assessments); and • child outcomes (e.g., track indicators of family stability and child health and well-being) 	Not applicable or not ready	Considering/ planning	Implementing	Complete	Other
3. Data consistency: Indicate the current status of efforts to establish common measurements and consistent data reporting mechanisms to enable information sharing and analysis across state agencies and programs and between the state and local levels.	Not applicable or not ready	Considering/ planning	Implementing	Complete	Other
4. Communications strategy: Indicate the current status of efforts to develop a communications strategy to report progress and use results to inform policy decisions and build support for school readiness efforts among parents, educators, legislators, policymakers, and the public.	Not applicable or not ready	Considering/ planning	Implementing	Complete	Other
5. Track progress: Indicate the current status of efforts to use, progress results to revisit the comprehensive plan, evaluate progress, and realign goals, resources, and priorities over time.	Not applicable or not ready	Considering/ planning	Implementing	Complete	Other

