

Early Childhood Councils

*First Quarter, SFY2009-2010
(July 1-September 30, 2009)*



Colorado Department of Human Services
people who help people



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Introduction

In Colorado, Early Childhood Councils are charged with facilitating the coordination and integration of services for young children (generally, birth-age 8) and their families. These services cross the four domains that address the whole child, as described in the Early Childhood Colorado Framework (http://earlychildhoodcolorado.org/systems_building/): (1) **early learning**, (2) **family support & parent education**, (3) **social, emotional & mental health**, and (4) **health**.

Early Childhood Councils' systems building work falls into three general categories, with the second and third categories aligning directly with the Early Childhood Colorado Framework:

- **Creating Internal Capacity**
 - Council governance
 - Communication mechanisms
 - Evaluation/assessment
 - Strategic planning
 - Resource development/sustainability
- **Building Foundations for the Local System**
 - Build and support partnerships
 - Fund & invest
 - Change policy
 - Build public engagement
 - Share accountability
 - Generate leadership opportunities
- **Impacting Services within the System**
 - Quality
 - Access
 - Equity

Throughout this report, many graphs are color-coded to reflect alignment with the Early Childhood Colorado Framework. Graphs emphasizing the four domains use the colors above that are taken from the Framework. Similarly, graphs relating to Council roles reflect our Early Childhood Council roles document, which draws on the Framework for the last two role categories.

Creating Internal Capacity

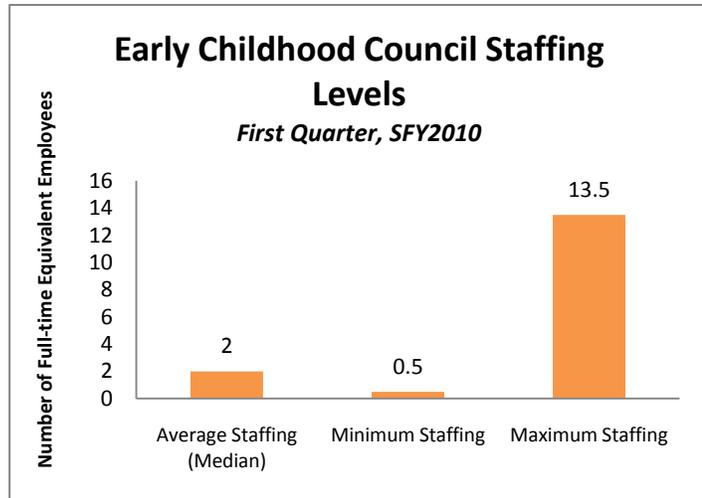
The core of Early Childhood Council work is developing, maintaining, and strengthening the organizational and governance structure that supports the coordination and integration of community early childhood services into a effective system. It is the development of this capacity that allows Councils to do the additional work of building the foundations of the system in their communities and, ultimately, impacting the services within that system.

The charts in this section display the status of different aspects of Councils' internal capacity across the state. Included here is information on the coordinators and other personnel who staff the Councils,

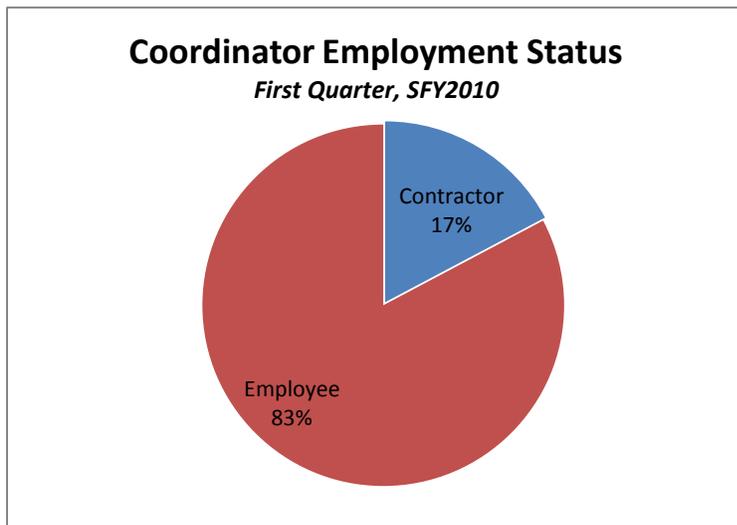
Council membership, governance structure, communication mechanisms, strategic planning, and resource development and evaluation capabilities of the Council.

Staffing

All Councils have at least part-time staff to support their core work. During the first quarter of FY2009-2010 (July 1-September 30, 2009), 25% of coordinators were employed to work less than one full FTE and the average Council staffing across the state was 2 FTE (up slightly from the previous quarter). During the same time period, 18 out of 30



coordinators (60%) had been on the job for two years or less.

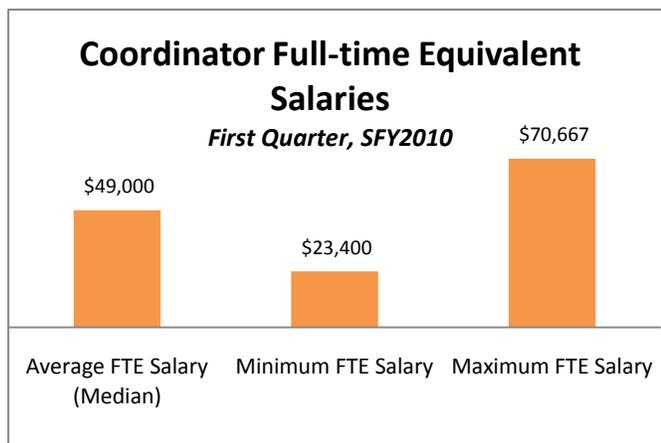


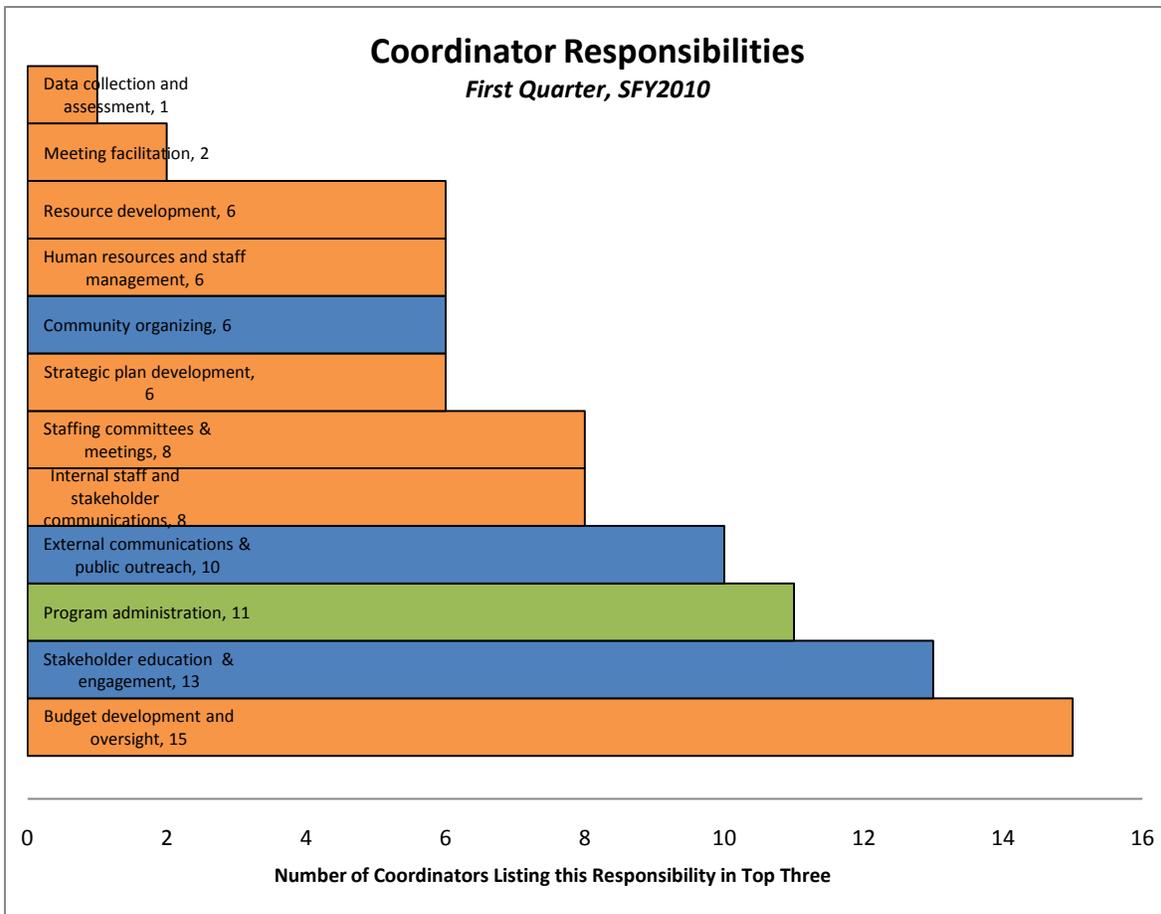
Most Council coordinators are employed as staff of the Council, although 17%, or 5 coordinators, are contractors. The average (median) coordinator salary is \$49,000, although there is significant variation due to geographic location, education level and other factors.

Coordinator responsibilities are similar across Councils, with the top functions including:

- Budget development and oversight;
- Stakeholder education and engagement;
- Program administration; and
- External communications and public outreach

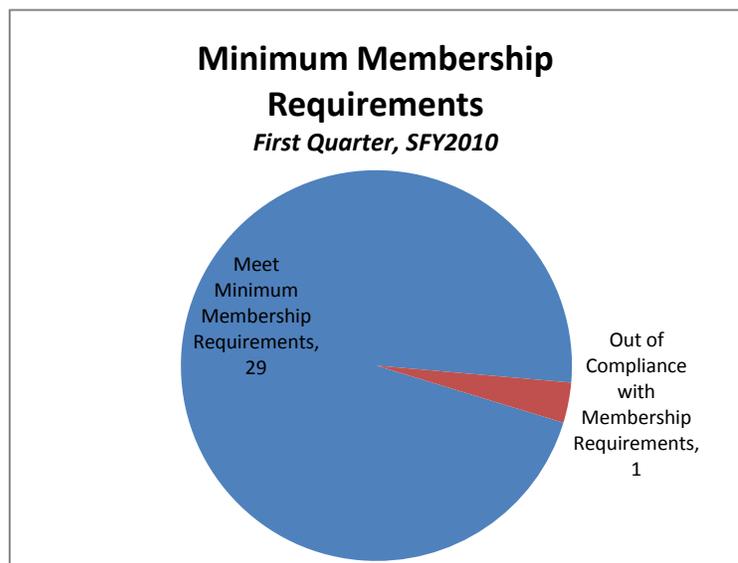
Of these top functions (as reported by the coordinators), one is focused on creating internal capacity, two emphasize building the foundations of a system, and one is centered around impacting services.



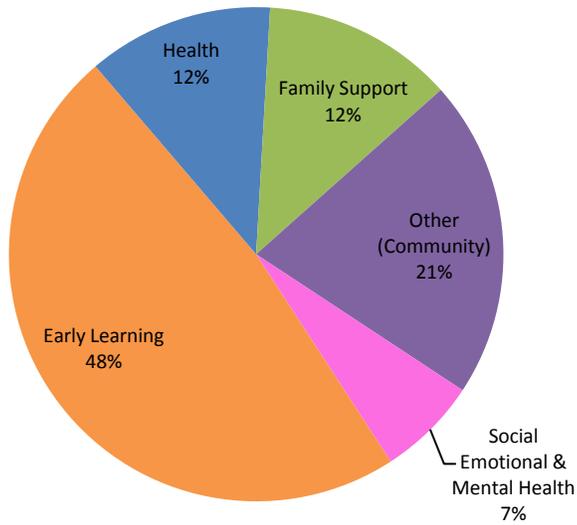


Council Governance

Council governance refers to the organizational structure of the Council, as well as the policies and procedures that are in place to support effective operations and decision making. During the 1st quarter of FY2009-2010 (July 1-Sept. 30, 2009), 29 out of 30 Councils indicated that their membership reflected the legislated requirements from HB-1062. This legislation requires representation from the four domains on each Council, in addition to representation from local government, parents of young children, and resource and referral agencies. Other members may be drawn from school districts, Head Start, local businesses and chambers of commerce, libraries, faith-based organizations, higher education institutions and other interested entities in the community. Early Learning is the most strongly



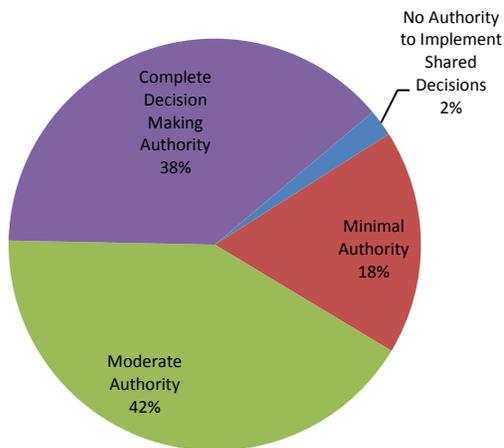
Membership by Domain First Quarter SFY2010



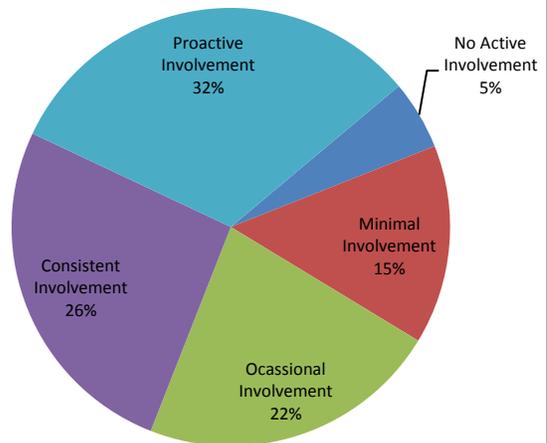
represented domain across Councils, at 48% of overall membership. The Health and Family Support/Parent Education domains are both represented at 12% of membership overall, while the Social, Emotional and Mental Health domain makes up 7% of Council membership across the state. Across Councils, Other (Community) representation – which includes business, local government, faith-based organizations and higher education – makes up the second largest membership category at 21% of all membership.

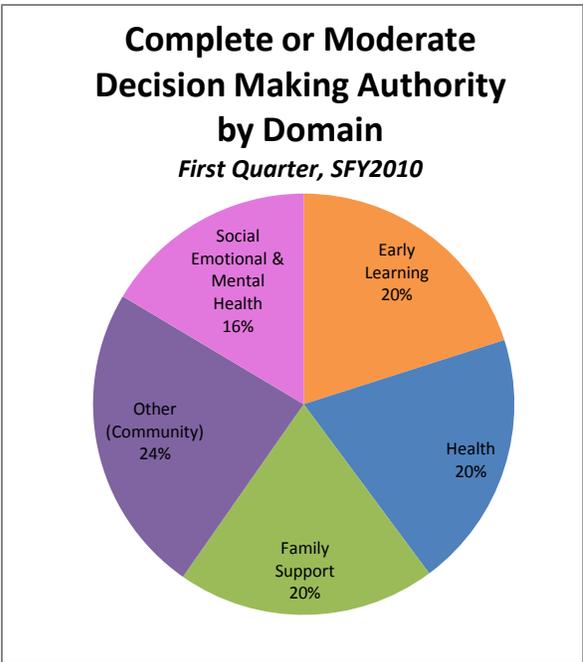
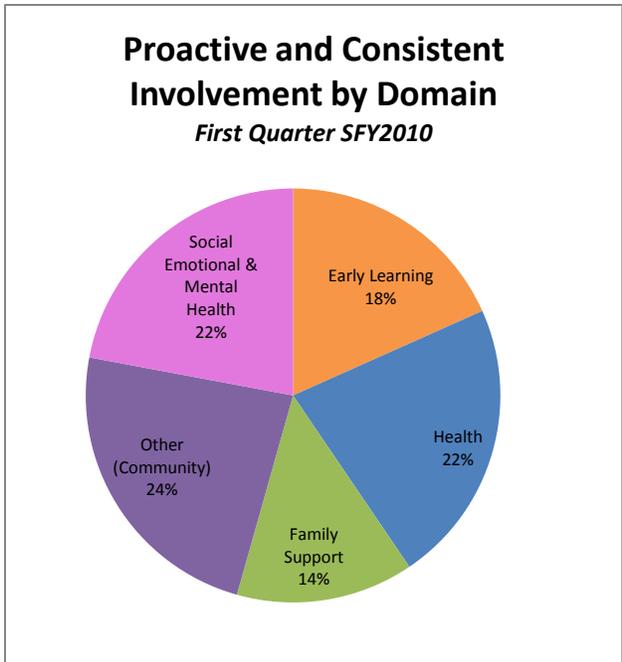
Of course, not all members are equally involved in Councils, nor do they all have the same decision-making authority when it comes to carrying out initiatives or decisions of the Council within their home organizations. During the first quarter of this fiscal year, 58% of all Council members were classified at either proactively or consistently involved in the Council, meaning that 42% of Council members across the state had only occasional, minimal or no involvement at all. Fortunately, Council members across the state actually have a fair amount of decision-making authority within their own organizations – 80% have “complete” or “moderate” decision-making authority, suggesting that they can make some or all decisions for their organizations without consultation with others.

Decision Making Authority of Council Members First Quarter SFY2010



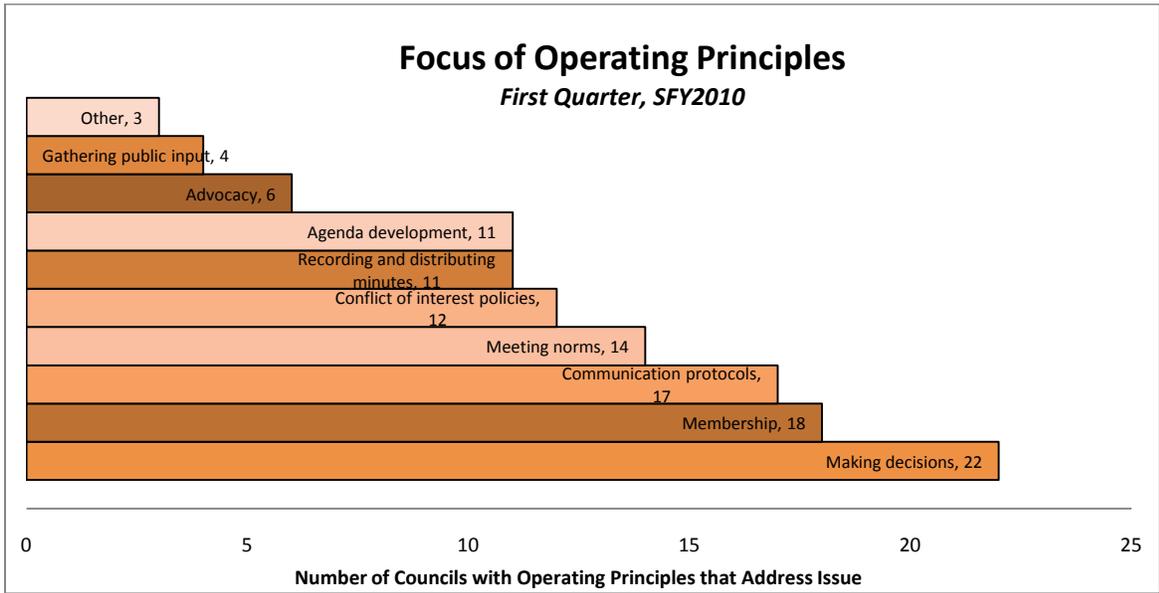
Involvement Level of Council Members First Quarter SFY2010



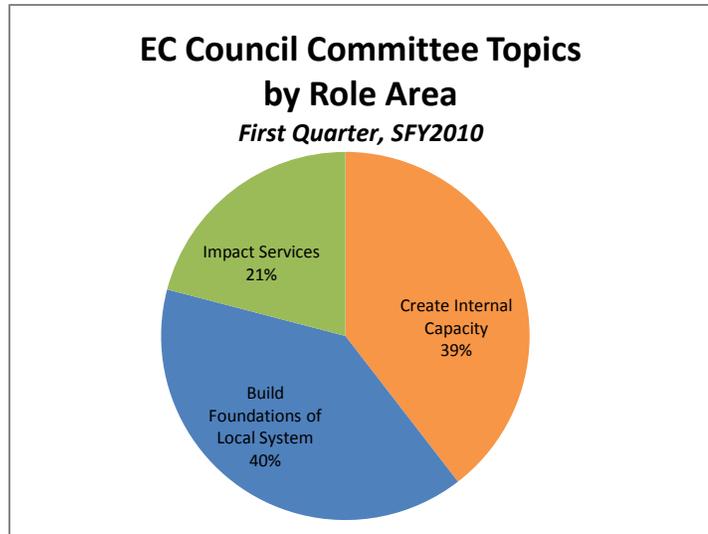


When considering those members whose level of involvement and decision-making authority is high, the four domains are very evenly represented at Colorado’s Council tables. Charts ___ and ___ show balanced levels of representation on Councils for each domain (and community participants) among those members who actively participate and who have the authority to make decisions. This suggests that Councils’ active membership can make decisions that truly impact early childhood systems and that this membership really is representing the “whole child” across the early childhood domains.

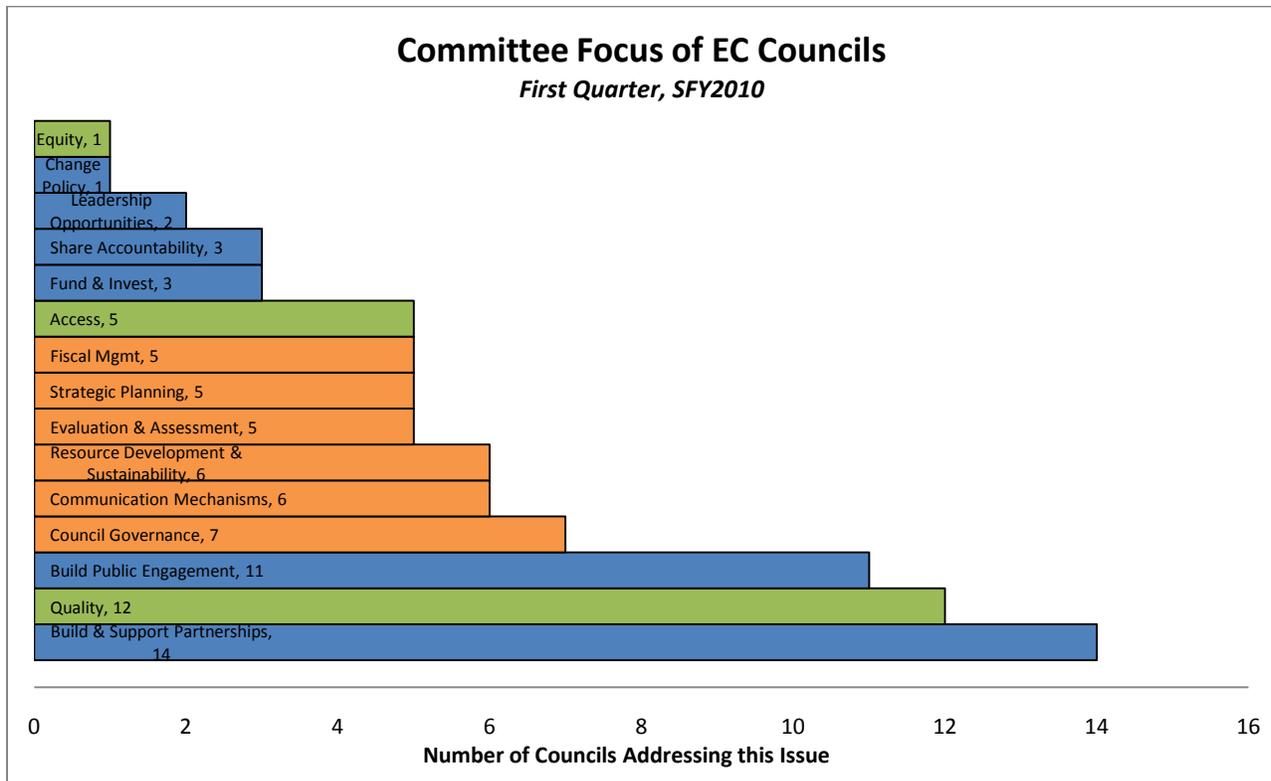
In terms of Council procedures and structures, during this quarter, only three Councils reported that they did not have a steering committee. Three Councils also did not have operating principles and two did not have by-laws. Operating principles cover a range of Council operations, most frequently: making decisions; membership; communication protocols; and meeting norms.



One of the primary mechanisms Councils have for governance and for implementing strategic priorities is the committee structure. Councils can set up committees under any structure that makes sense for their work, however, they all focus on common topics. When asked to identify committee topics by Council role areas, Councils across the state indicated that 40% of their committees work on building foundations of the local system, followed by creating internal capacity (39%) and impacting services (21%). This breakdown is further identified by the specific



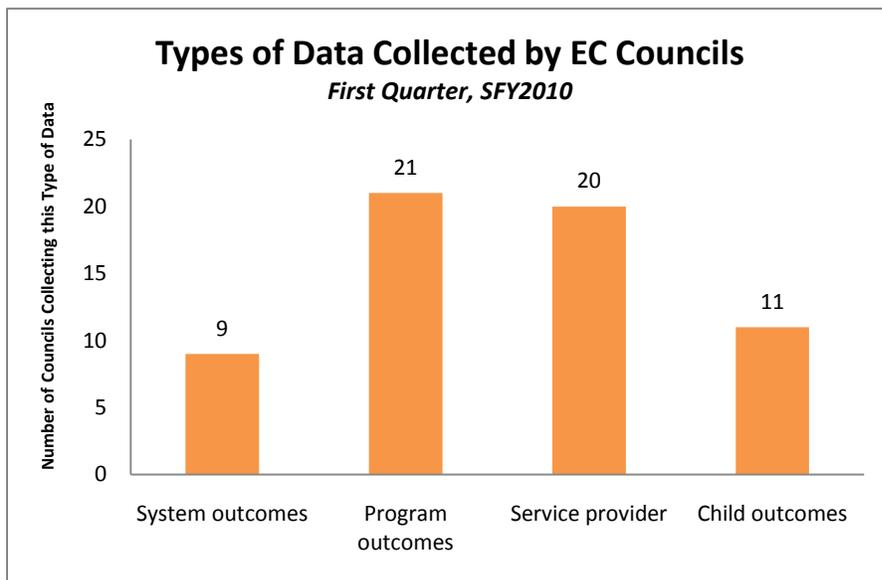
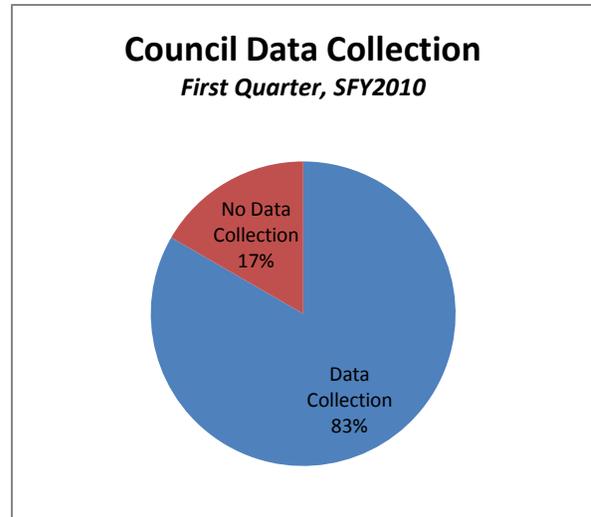
functions under these role areas, as depicted in the graph: Committee Focus of EC Councils. This graph shows that the top three committee topics across Councils are: (1) building and supporting partnerships; (2) impacting the quality of early childhood services; and (3) building public engagement. More sensitive foundational systems-building activities are generally not getting much committee focus at this point (specifically, shared funding and investments, shared accountability for results across agencies and domains, building early childhood leadership, and affecting policy changes). Similarly, impacting family access to services and the equity of services are not being widely addressed currently.



Evaluation and Assessment

As part of creating internal capacity, the evaluation and assessment category reflects the extent to which Councils are collecting, analyzing and communicating data related to their Council communities, functions, priorities, activities and systems-building. High functioning Early Childhood Councils will collect and use data to drive decision making about the early childhood system. In the first quarter, 25 of 30 Councils were collecting some kind of data.

Of those, the most commonly collected type of data was information on program outcomes (i.e., data

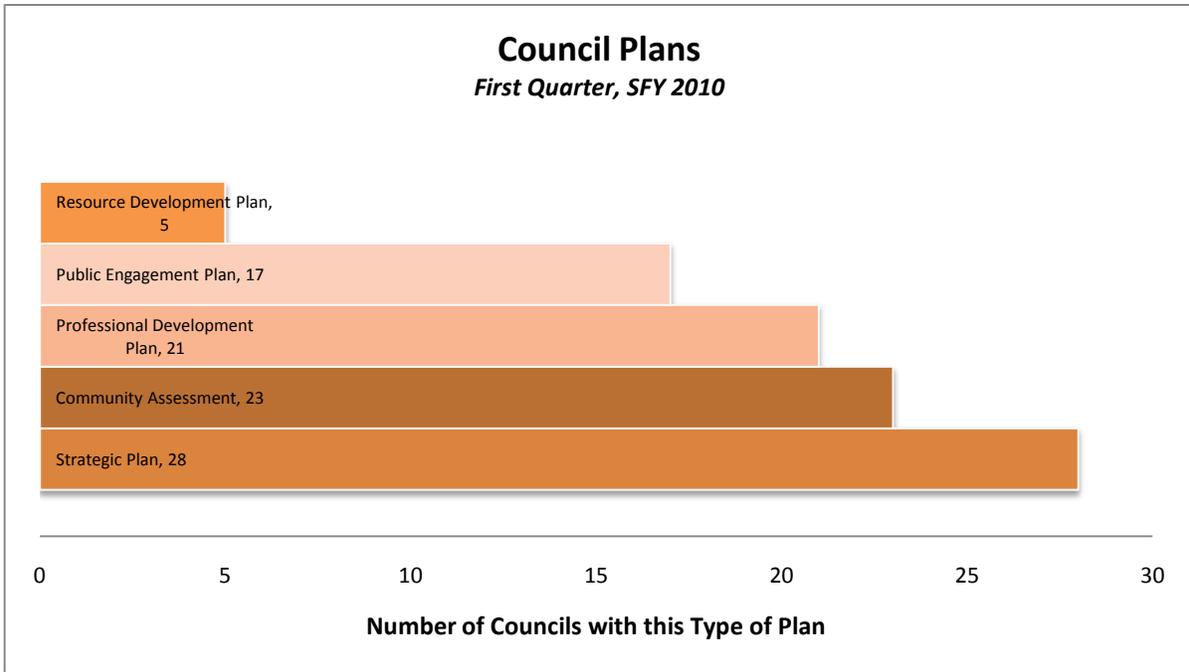


specifically connected to individual programs implemented by the Council or its partners), followed by information on service providers. Less commonly, Councils collected child outcome data (e.g., Results Matter assessment data, immunization rates, birth weight statistics), and even more infrequently, they collected system outcome information (i.e., data that

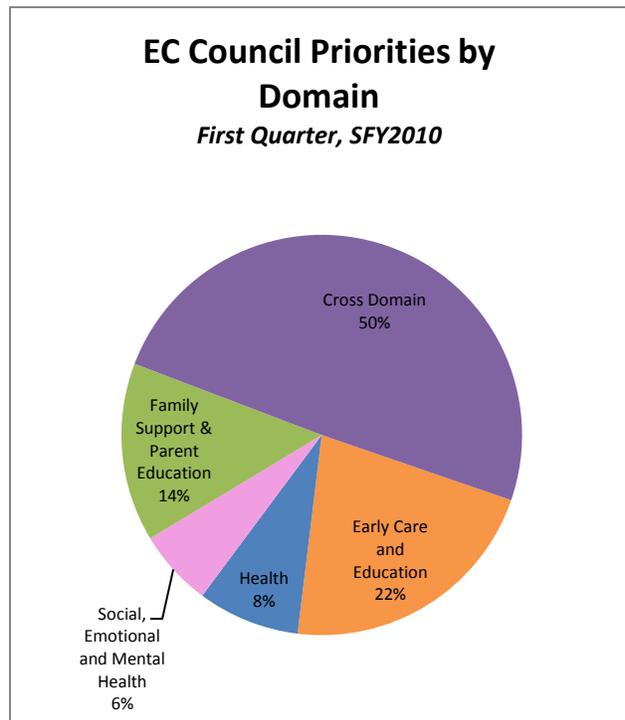
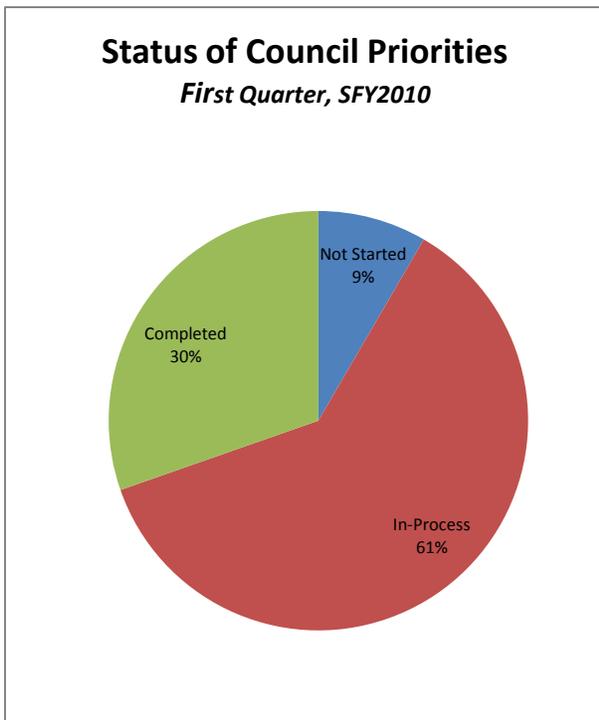
would indicate progress around internal Council capacity, building the foundations of a local system).

Strategic Planning

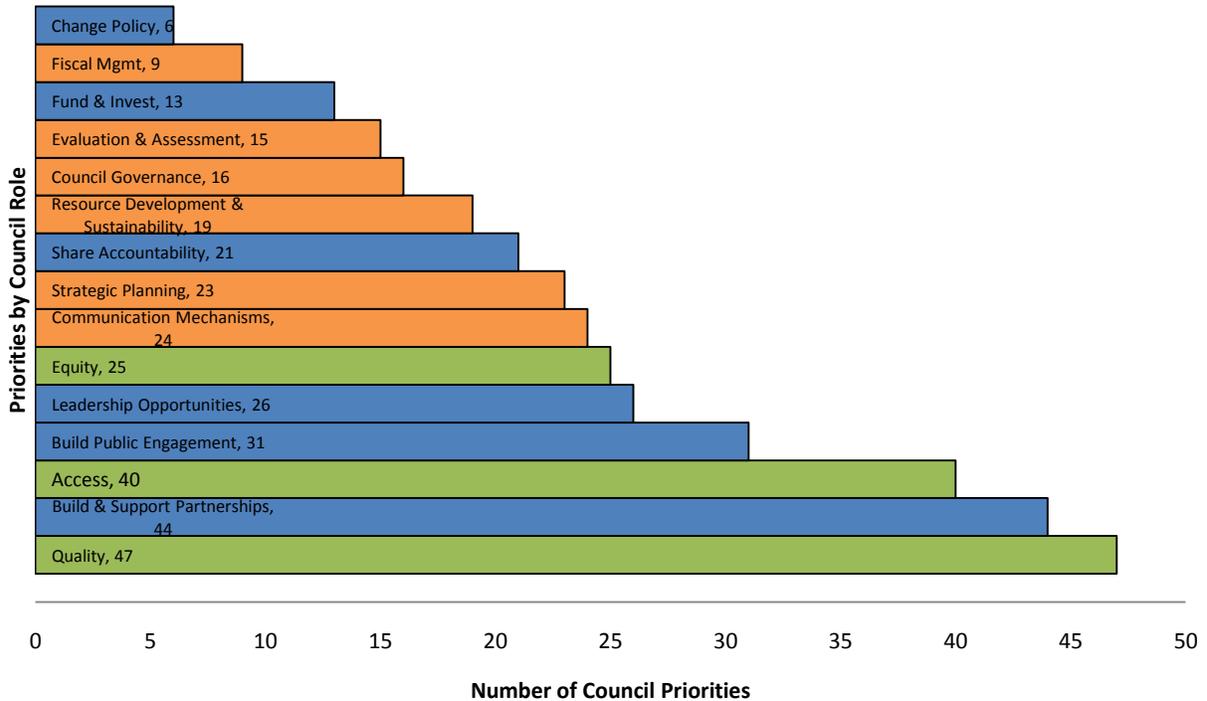
As part of their funding agreement with the State (Colorado Department of Education and Colorado Department of Human Services), Early Childhood Councils agree to develop strategic plans to guide their early childhood systems development work. In the first quarter of SFY2010, 28 Councils reported that they had strategic plans guiding their work. Twenty-three of these Councils also reported having community assessments and twenty-one Councils had professional development plans, either as part of their strategic plans or as stand-alone plans. More than half of all Councils (17) had public engagement plans in the first quarter, however, only five Councils reported having a resource development plan.



Councils report quarterly on the top three to five priorities from their strategic plans. According to this information, Councils had 61% of their priorities in-process during the first quarter. Of these, half were cross-domain priorities and 22% were focused on Early Learning. The remaining priorities fell into Family Support, Health and Social, Emotional & Mental Health categories, in that order.



EC Councils' Priority Focus *First Quarter, SFY2010*

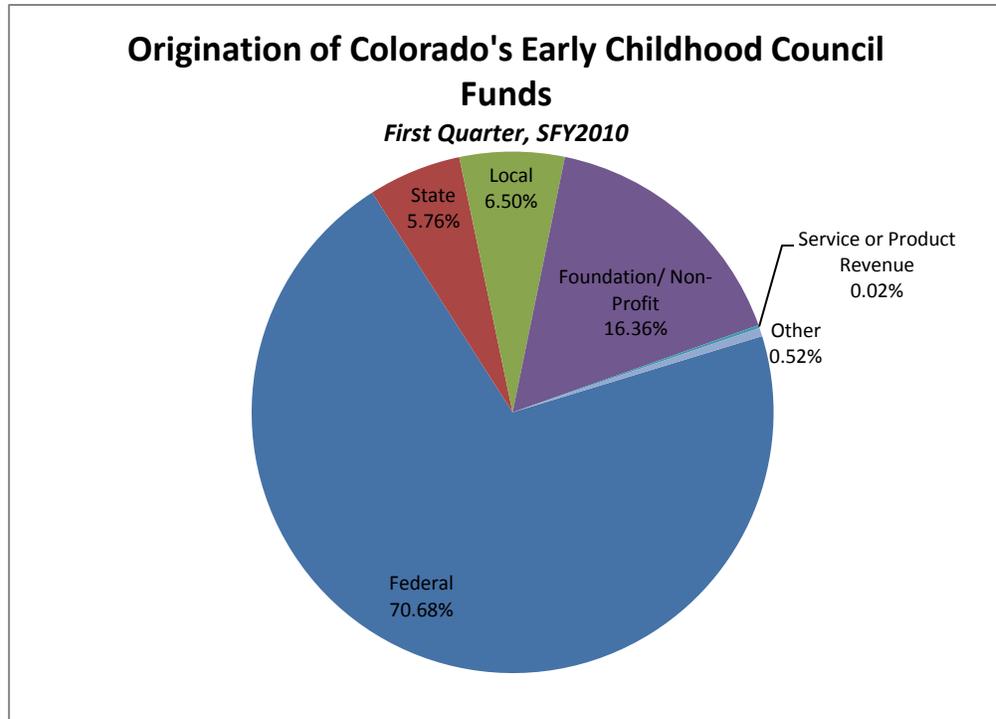


Strategic plan priorities, broken down by Council role areas, focus strongly on impacting services (particularly quality and access initiatives), and on some areas of building foundations of a local system (particularly, building and supporting partnerships, building public engagement and generating leadership opportunities).

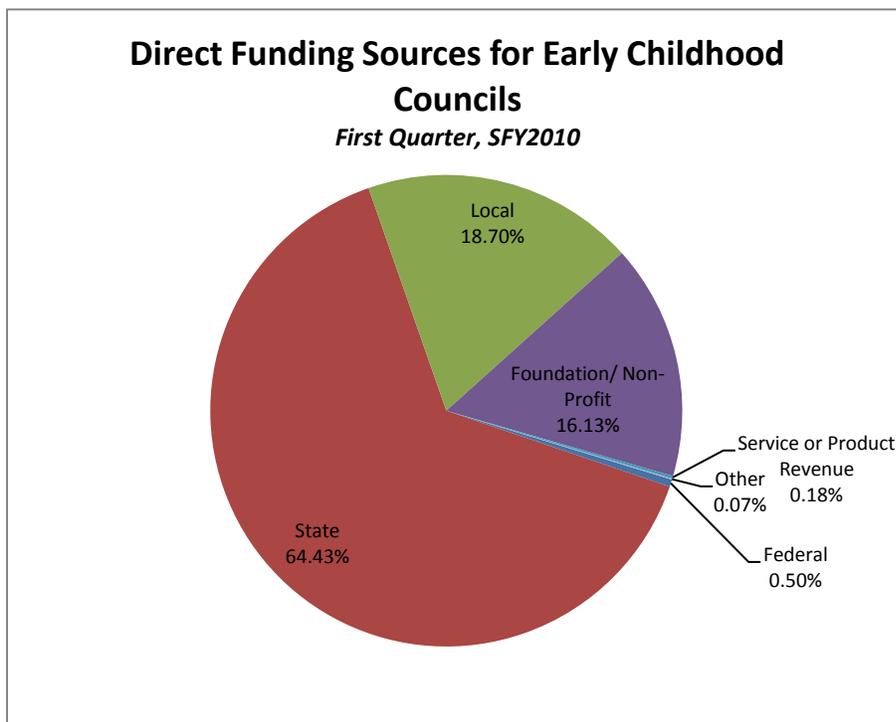
Resource Development and Sustainability

All Councils get base funding from the State Departments of Education and Human Services, via the federal Child Care Development Block Grant/Child Care Development Fund (CCDBG/CCDF). Generally, this funding acts as seed money to help Councils develop their internal capacity and begin to build the foundation of a local early childhood system. However, this base funding does not support all the work a Council can and should do to truly develop a high-functioning system of early childhood services at the local level. To do this, Councils must leverage the state funds to attract local and foundation dollars to support the work.

In the first quarter, Councils reported on the percentage of their funding based on where the money originated and also based on what type of entity granted the Council the money. Some funds for early childhood systems building originate at one level of



government, but are granted to the Councils from another level of government. For instance, the CCDBG/CCDF funds originate at the federal level, but are granted to the Councils by the State. Similarly, a number of Councils receive money from their local human service agencies that originated at the federal level as Temporary Assistance for Needy Families dollars. The two graphs in this section illustrate the reliance of early childhood systems building efforts on funds that originate at the federal level (over 70% of EC Council dollars), and simultaneously, on funds that are distributed or granted by



the State (over 64% of EC Council dollars). Only a little more than 5% of early childhood systems funds originate at the state level. Foundations or non-profit organizations are the source of over 16% of systems-building funds.

While the State grants the Councils most of their funds, local governments are granting Councils almost 19% of their funds, suggesting that Councils are building

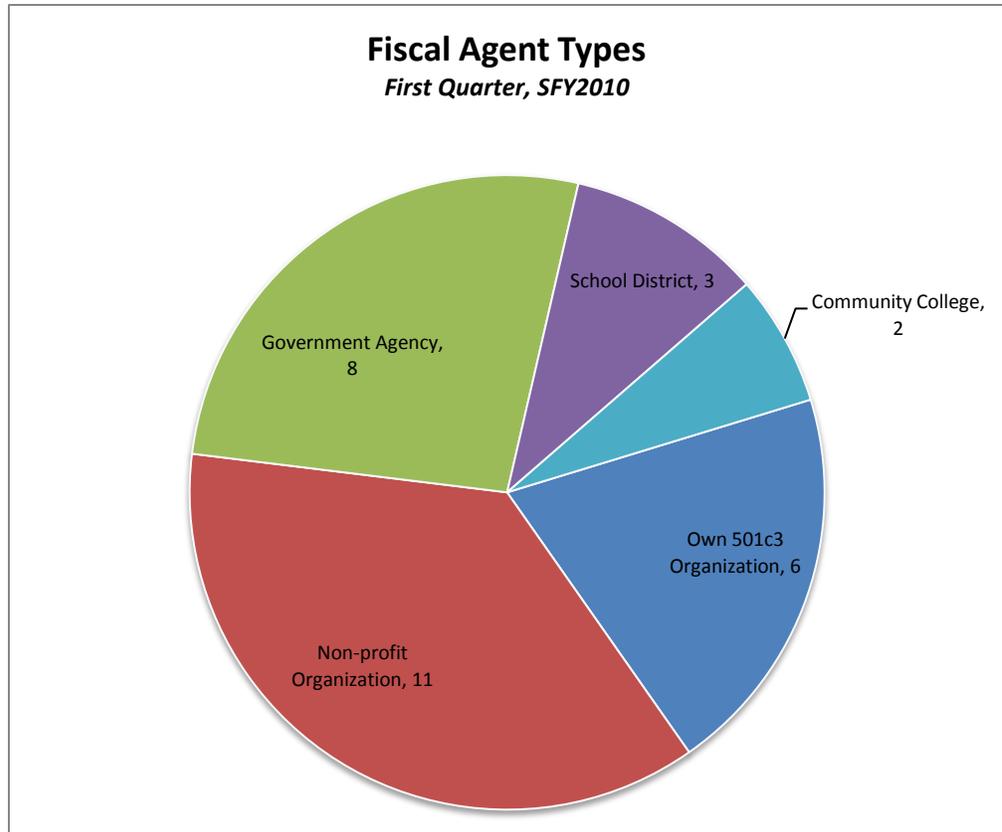
some important local partnerships that are resulting in leveraged dollars.

Fiscal Management

This area of a Council’s internal capacity refers to the processes and procedures that a Council uses to oversee the funds it receives and controls. Because only six Councils operate as their own

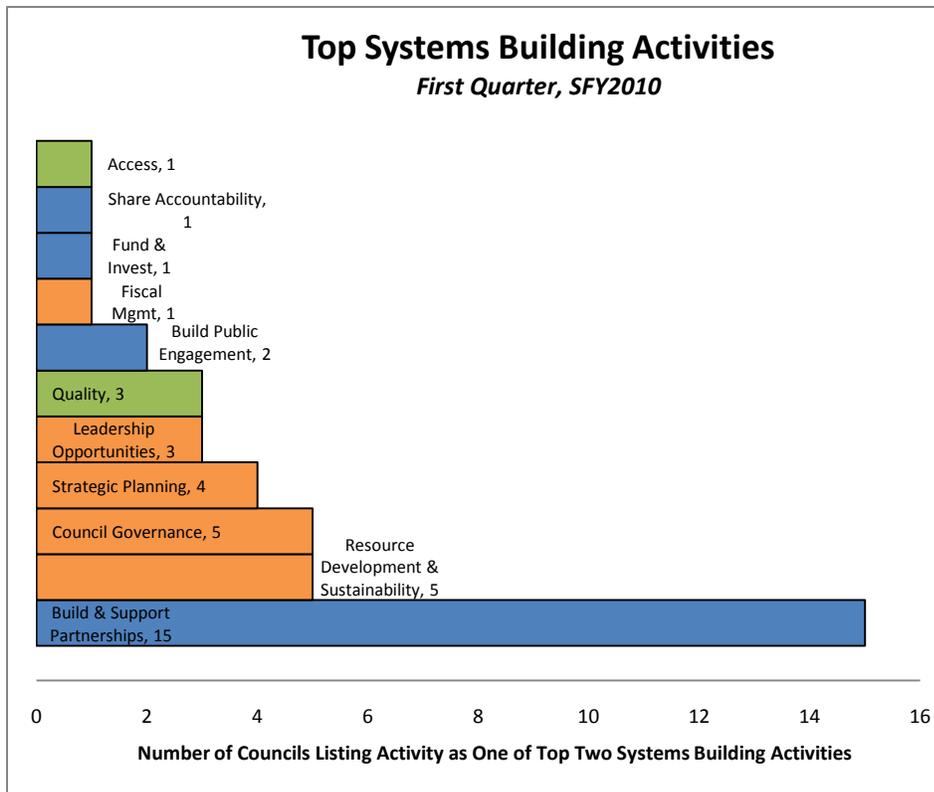
501(c)3 organizations, fiscal management is often at least partially shared by Councils with their fiscal agents.

Councils in Colorado that do not have independent 501(c)3 status use a variety of fiscal agents to help manage their resources, including community non-profit organizations, government agencies, school districts and communities colleges.



Building Foundations of a Local System

Building an early childhood system of services that is seamless for families is the primary work of Colorado’s Early Childhood Councils. This work often involves significant changes in practice across programs and domains that lead to new partnerships, shared funding and investment, cross-agency accountability, streamlined policies and procedures, and enhanced leadership capacity.

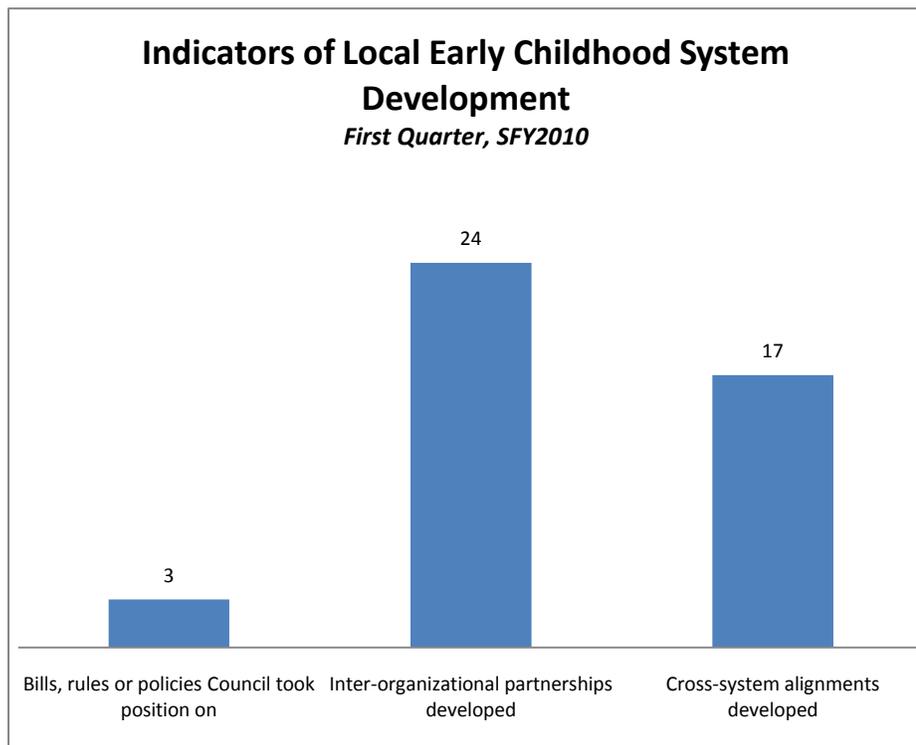


Build and Support Partnerships

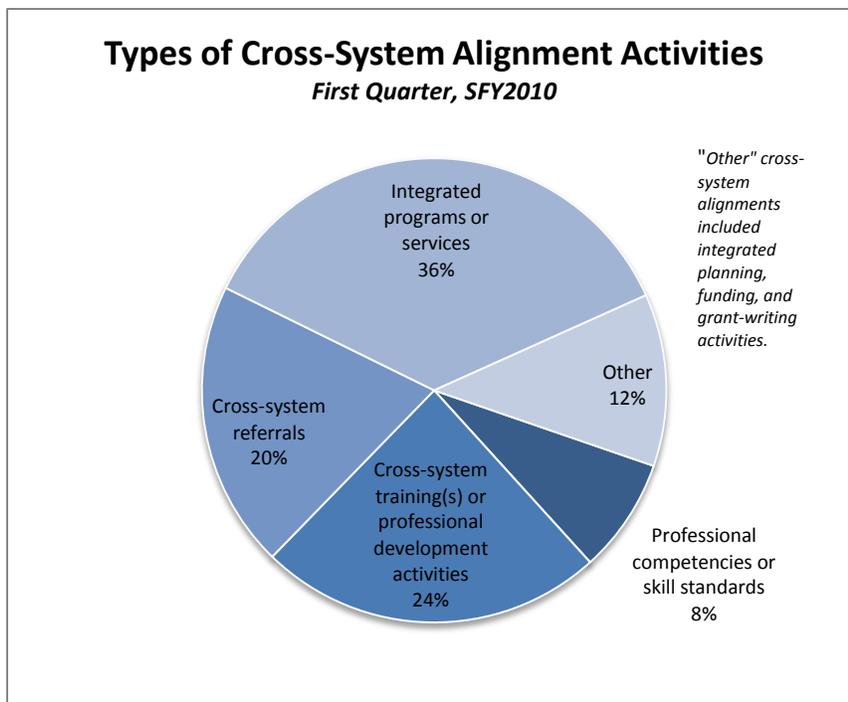
When asked to report the two most significant tasks associated with systems building work, Coordinators overwhelmingly identified activities related to “Building and Supporting Partnerships” as the primary task of developing early childhood systems at the local level. Other frequent answers tended to fall into the work of building

internal capacity for the Council (e.g., fundraising, Council governance, and strategic planning).

Other indicators also suggest the importance of partnerships in developing coordinated early childhood systems. Over the first quarter of SFY 2010, nine Councils formed twenty-four new interorganizational partnerships, and seventeen different Councils reported developing cross-system alignments during the quarter. Cross-system alignments refer to the coordination of similar or possibly duplicative activities that were previously taking place within separate organizations that are now being coordinated or aligned between two or more organizations.



The next chart, *Types of Cross-System Alignment Activities*, describes the type of cross-system alignments that were developed by these seventeen Councils. Most commonly, Councils reported integrating programs or services between organizations. Examples range from cross-agency partnerships to hire staff to combining early childhood mental health programs under one umbrella organization. In addition, Councils reported aligning training or



professional development activities (e.g., coordinating college credit for early childhood professional development opportunities), as well as aligning referrals across systems. Reported cross-system referrals have included a range of local agencies that impact children and families, including health providers, child welfare agencies, 2-1-1 referral hotlines, and immigrant agencies.

Fund and Invest

As a foundation of building local early childhood systems, funding and investment activities refer to coordinated funding and investment of early childhood services across agencies, as well as to activities that lead to improved or expanded investment in early childhood services across domains. Despite the importance of this function, few Councils are at a point in their development where they are focusing much attention here. It is the third lowest category for Council priorities within their strategic plans (see the chart *EC Councils' Priority Focus*) and only one Council listed it as one of their two top systems-building activities. Similarly, only three Councils report having committees dedicated to focusing on funding and investment.

This foundational area is a challenge for Councils since discussing possible changes in the use of limited resources can threaten or strain even the strongest partnerships. Nevertheless, this is an important function for Councils to play and the current limited focus on this area suggests a need to come up with strategies to begin tackling this issue.

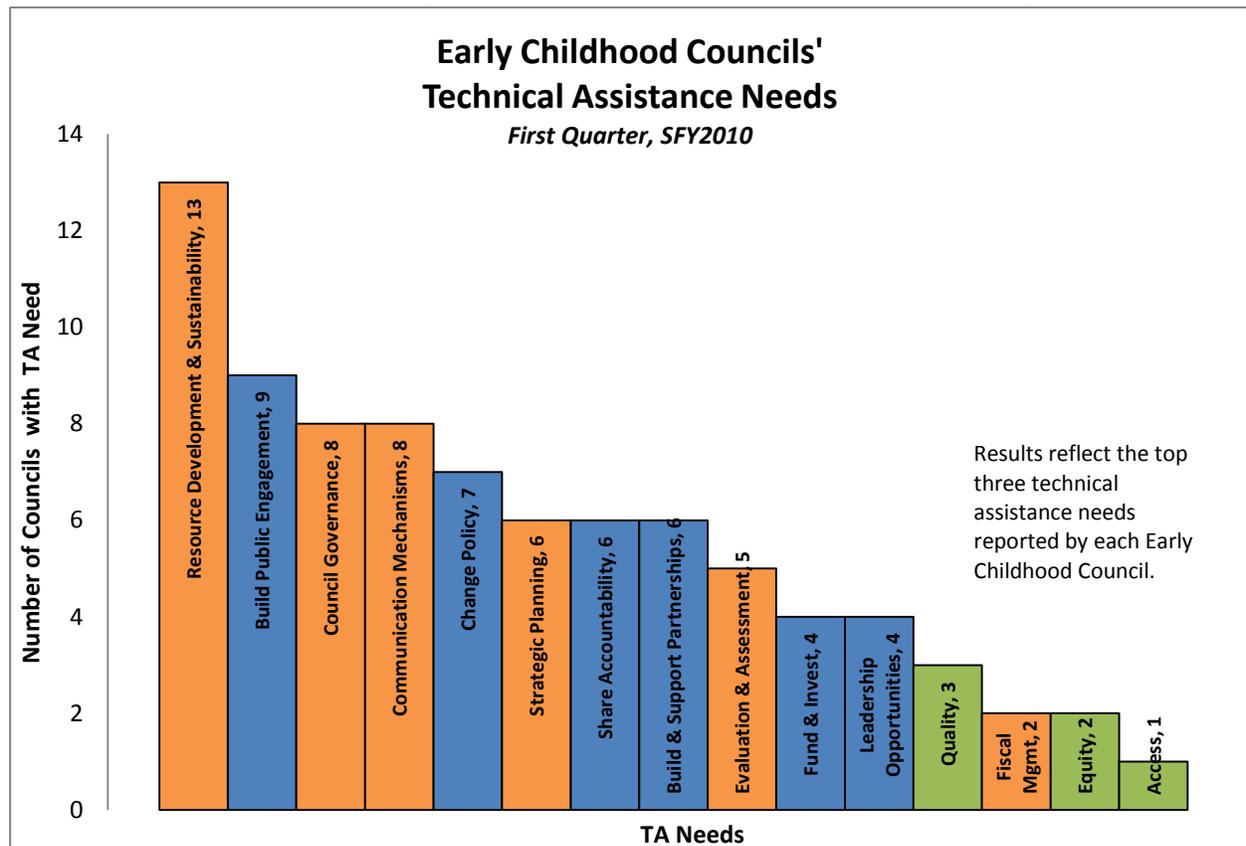
Change Policy

Activities that focus on changing policy include such things as advocacy for changes in government policies, educating local and state decision makers about early childhood issues, and applying for or implementing waivers of state regulations. Based on quarterly reporting, Councils are not currently concentrating on changing policy as a primary activity. Only one Council reported that they have a

committee that focuses on policy changes. Similarly, it is the least frequently cited area for Council’s strategic priorities. Other evidence is more mixed. Only three Councils reported that their Council took a position on bills, rules or policies during the first quarter. However, 12 Councils also indicated that their members provided information about early childhood issues to elected officials during the quarter, while 13 Councils indicated that their staff provided early childhood information to elected officials (see the chart below on *Building Leadership Capacity*).

Build Public Engagement

Building public engagement is the second most common type of strategic priority for Councils. Across the state, Councils indicate that they have 31 strategic priorities aimed at building public engagement, which can include any activity designed to inform or involve stakeholders and/or the general public in



early childhood systems building issues. Eleven Councils have committees that are dedicated to public engagement activities. And public engagement comes up second only to resource development as the area in which Councils are requesting technical assistance (see chart on *Early Childhood Councils' Technical Assistance Needs*). Despite this, only two Councils mentioned building public engagement functions within their two most important systems building activities. This difference is most likely connected to question format. The question regarding the most important systems building activities is open-ended (no specific selections were provided as forced-choice answers), while the questions about committees and technical assistance are drop-down menus with specific choices related to the *Early Childhood Colorado Framework* and *Council Roles* documents.

Share Accountability

Typically, shared accountability is reflected in a shared vision and a shared responsibility for supports and services available to young children and their families. We are measuring shared accountability by the level of Council member participation in strategic planning processes, as well as the extent to which members share data.

During the first quarter, Councils reported member participation in strategic planning and data sharing as follows:

QUARTILE	Percent Participation in Strategic Planning	Percent Sharing Data across Organizations
1 ST QUARTILE	0-66%	0-11%
2 ND QUARTILE (MEDIAN)	67-80%	12-28%
3 RD QUARTILE	80-92%	29-50%
4 TH QUARTILE	92-100%.	51-90%

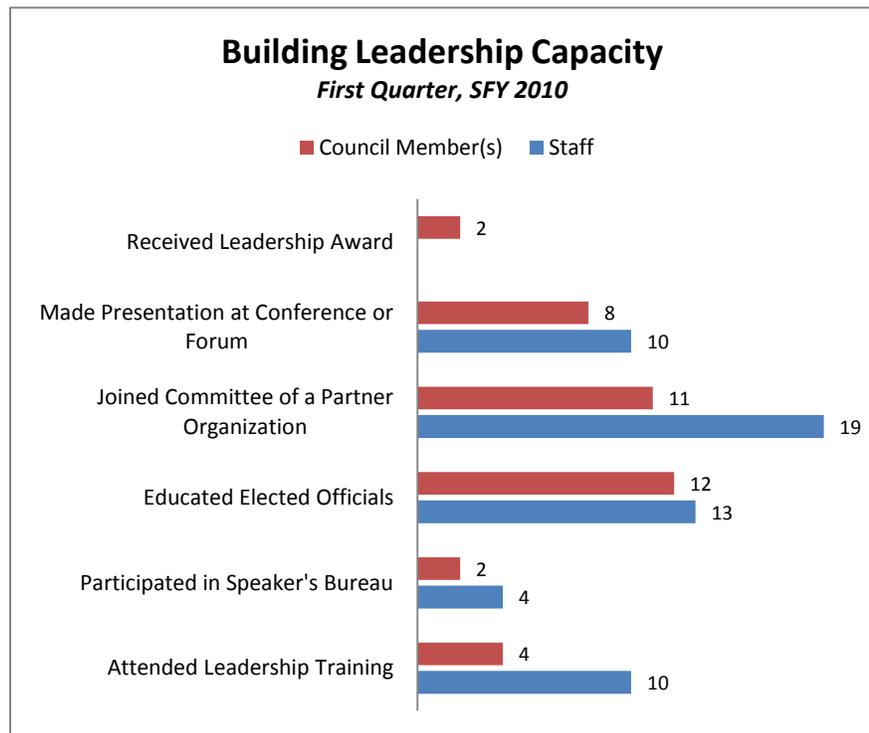
Note: The first quartile is the first 25% of a group, therefore, 25% of Councils had 66% or fewer members participate in strategic planning, however another 25% had nearly 100% participation.

Only three Councils currently have committees dedicated to shared accountability issues and only one Council mentions this area as a significant systems building function. Nevertheless, across the Councils, there are 21 active strategic priorities focused on this foundation of systems building.

Generate Leadership Opportunities

During the first quarter of SFY 2010, all but three of Colorado’s Early Childhood Councils reported engaging in activities to build leadership capacity. The chart to the left provides detail on the types of leadership-building

opportunities Councils participated in, broken down by Council members and Council staff. The top leadership-building activities for Council members included educating elected officials, joining committees of partner agencies and making presentations at conferences or forums. Council staff was more likely to have attended leadership training or participated in speaker’s bureaus than were their Council members.



Impact Services

One of the primary roles of Colorado’s Early Childhood Councils is to provide a forum through which partners can collaborate to increase or improve services for families and children. As a rule, the Councils do not provide direct services for children and families. However, through their collaborative efforts described throughout this report, Councils are a vehicle for impacting the quality, availability and equity of services.

Quality

Impacting quality is the top strategic priority area for Councils across the state (see, *EC Councils’ Priority Focus*, page 9). In addition, it is the second most common focus area for a Council committee, with twelve Councils reporting that they have committees dedicated to focusing on impacting quality.

In addition, the State funds two programs through the Councils to help them positively impact quality:

- Enhancing Quality Initiative, which includes three series of courses:
 - Enhancing Quality for Infants and Toddlers (EQIT) Courses
 - Ounce Courses
 - Touchpoints Courses
- School Readiness Quality Improvement Program

Expanding Quality Initiative

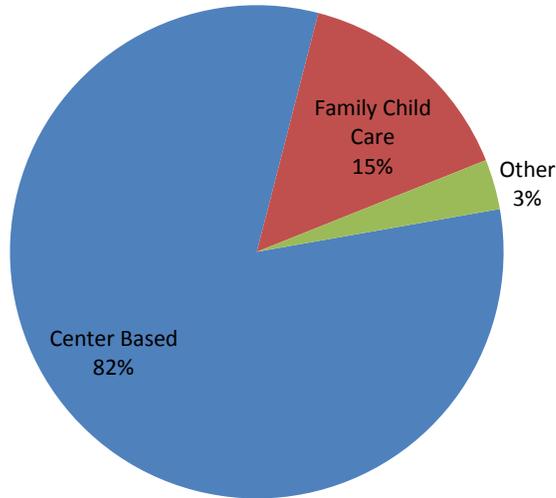
The Enhancing Quality Initiative includes EQIT, Ounce and Touchpoints classes. The table below summarizes some of the data for all three courses. Additional details are provided in separate sections below.

EQ Initiative (First Quarter, SFY2010)

Course Name	Councils Funded to Conduct Courses	Courses Funded for Fiscal Year	Courses Initiated During Quarter	Participants Enrolled	Participants Completed During Quarter*	Coaching Hours Conducted During Quarter	Infants & Toddlers Impacted
EQIT	27	55	23	360	0	100.75	1860
Ounce	14	18	3	29	18	0	168
Touchpoints	7	14	2	59	52	0	56

*Note: Some courses – especially EQIT – cross over quarters, so participant completions only reflect those students whose classes had completed by the end of the quarter.

Employer Types of EQ Participants
First Quarter, SFY2010



EQIT Courses

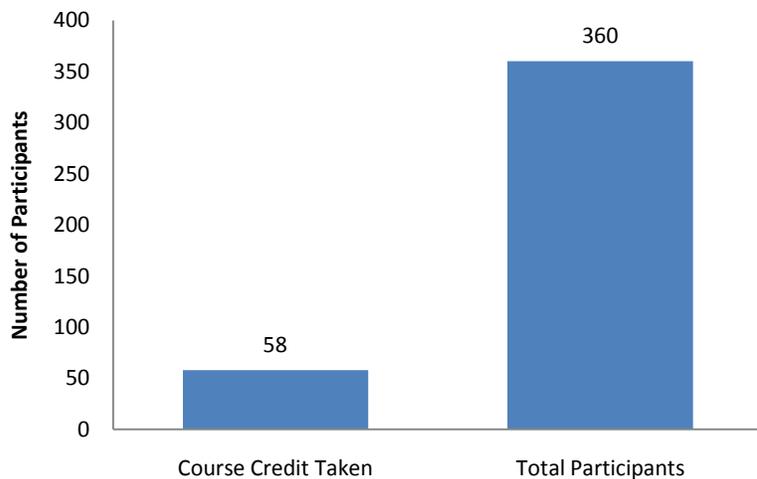
EQIT is a 48-hour course of training designed to improve the quality of care for Colorado’s infants and Toddlers. It is run through training teams that are managed by the Early Childhood Councils. During the first quarter twenty-six out of thirty Councils had been funded to conduct EQIT courses. In addition, one EQIT team was funded in Prowers County, where there is no Council operating. Within these communities, Councils were funded to conduct 55 courses over the course of the fiscal year (July 1, 2009-June 30, 2010) and were funded to provide 4,022 coaching hours over the same time period.

During the first quarter, communities initiated 23 EQIT courses, serving 360 service providers (because the courses are 48 hours long, and typically delivered over 6-8 consecutive weeks, some courses began during the first quarter but may not have ended by the end of the quarter).

Most of the students taking the EQIT course during the first quarter were employees of child care centers (82%), however 15% were family child care providers and 3% hold other early childhood service positions in their communities (e.g., Bright Beginnings Coordinator, stay-at-home mom, nanny, Family-Friend-and-Neighbor coach, Council staff).

Many EQIT classes are offered for college credit in Colorado. In the first quarter, 91% of the EQIT classes offered were available for college credit. Participants are not required to take the course for credit, however it is an option that is available in most cases and participants who are trying to earn early childhood credentials, meet group leader qualifications or complete an Associate’s degree often choose to take the

EQ Participants Taking Course for Credit
First Quarter, SFY2010



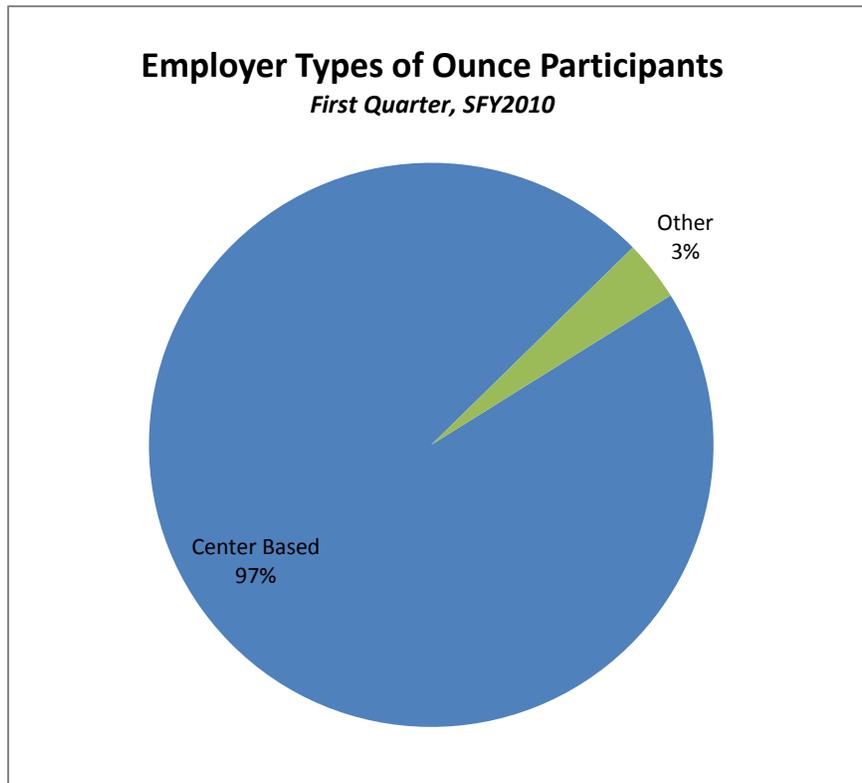
course for credit. In all of the communities where the course is offered for credit, the class students earn credit for is ECE 111 (Infant and Toddler Theory and Practice). When courses are offered for credit, it is a result of collaboration between the Early Childhood Council and the credit-granting Community College. During the first quarter, 58 students (16%) elected to take the EQIT training for college credit.

In addition to the actual classes that are the core of the EQIT course of training, coaching is also a key element to the training. Evidence shows that one-on-one, on-site coaching helps participants to better implement the practices taught in the class, leading to improved quality of care for infants and toddlers.

Because coaching typically happens toward the end of, or even after, the conclusion of the actual class-time training, only 100.75 hours of coaching had been conducted by the end of the first quarter. Some of the per-participant data on coaching is provided in the attached graphic, which shows that while at least one participant received 7 hours of coaching during the first quarter, the average was less than one and many had not yet started receiving coaching.

Ounce Scale Training

The Ounce Scale is an observational assessment that allows early childhood service providers and families a tool to monitor and record a child's development from birth to 42 months of age. The training provides instruction and optional follow-up coaching on using the tool in practice. Of the 18 courses funded for the



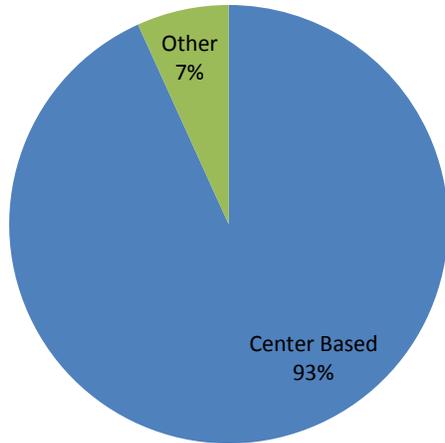
fiscal year, three were initiated during the first quarter, enrolling 29 participants from three different Councils. Over 160 infants and toddlers were being served by the participants in these courses, the majority of whom (97%) worked at center-based early care and education facilities. No Ounce coaching hours were provided during the quarter.

Touchpoints Individual Level Training

Touchpoints training is based on the work of Dr. T. Barry Brazelton, a pediatrician and renowned author. The training instructs participants on predictable patterns in early child development and how to use these to enhance the family-provider partnership. For SFY2010, the State has funded 14 courses and 72 coaching hours for Touchpoints. During the first quarter, two courses were conducted and 52 participants completed the training, impacting the quality of services provided to 56 infants and

Employer Types of Touchpoints Participants

First Quarter, SFY2010



toddlers. As with the Ounce training, most Touchpoints participants were center-based early care and education providers. No coaching was provided around Touchpoints during the first quarter.

School Readiness Quality Improvement Program
The School Readiness Quality Improvement Program was created by the Colorado Legislature in 2002 and is fully administered by the Department of Human Services.

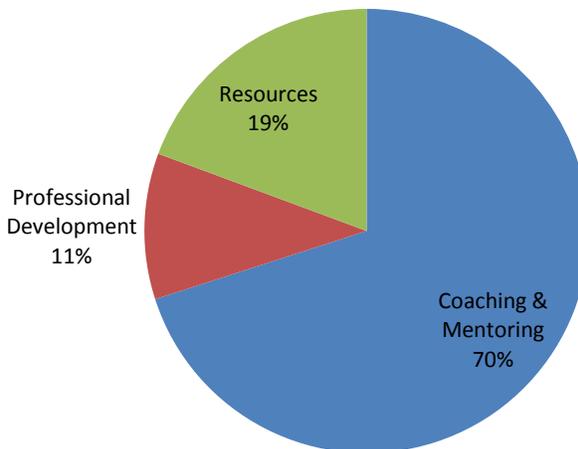
The program helps improve the school readiness of children birth to five years who are cared for in sites that feed into low-performing elementary schools. All school readiness projects are operated through local Early Childhood Councils. As of the first quarter of SFY2010, 14 Early Childhood Councils were funded to implement School Readiness projects.

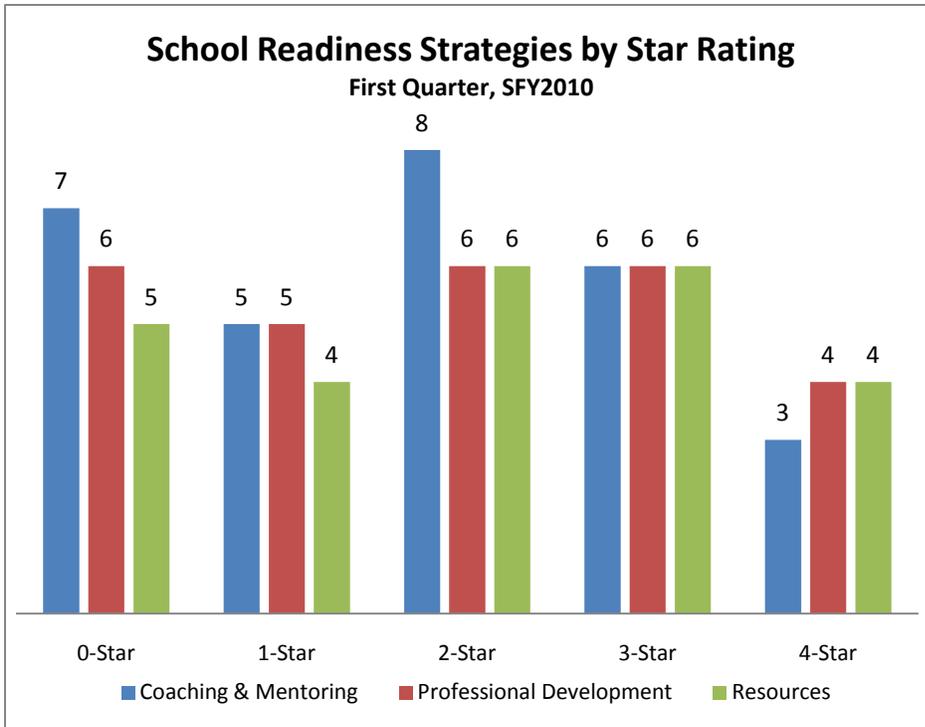
Early Childhood Councils design the strategies they will use to help improve early care and education sites participating in the School Readiness program. Since all participating sites receive Qualistar ratings as part of their participation, strategies are typically geared toward helping sites improve their Qualistar ratings. Strategies to improve the quality of the participating early care and education sites fall into three areas:

- Coaching and Mentoring of teachers and/or site directors
- Professional Development for staff at participating sites
- Resources to improve the classroom and playground environments

School Readiness Funding Allocations, by Strategy Type

First Quarter, SFY2010



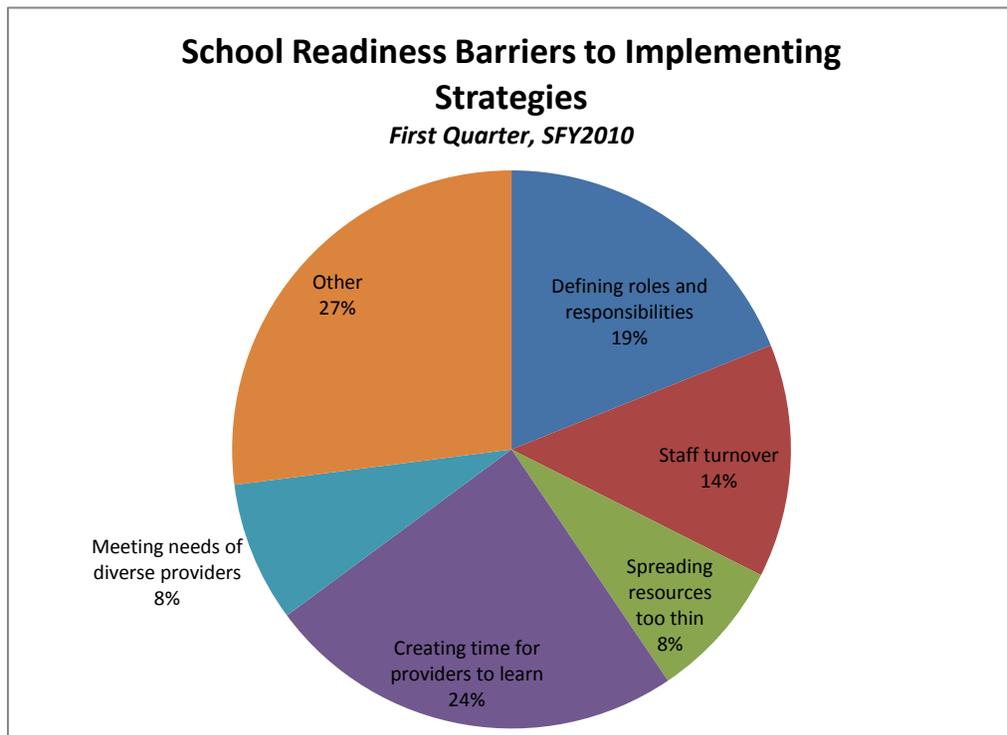


During the first quarter, School Readiness programs in Colorado reported allocating 70% of their program funds to Coaching and Mentoring strategies. Similarly, 75% of Councils with School Readiness programs identified Coaching and Mentoring as the most effective strategy for improving quality at sites.

Coaching and Mentoring is a most

common for 2-star and 0-star sites, where it is offered by at least half of all Councils with School Readiness programs. Only three Councils offer coaching to 4-star rated sites, and, in general, Councils seem to limit the strategies available to 4-star programs.

When asked to identify barriers to implementing School Readiness strategies, Councils' most common answer was that the problem was unique to their community or the classrooms in which they were working. However, analysis of the aggregate report data shows that these "unique" problems were very often echoed in a variety of program sites. For example,



almost 25% of the time, the barrier to implementing strategies was “creating time for providers to learn,” followed by “defining roles and responsibilities” of program participants, trainers and administrators.

Access and Equity

The final two areas where Councils can impact early childhood services are around access (or availability) and equity. The responses around these areas are mixed. Only five Councils have committees that focus on access issues and just one has a committee dedicated to looking at the equity of services available to young children and their families. However, activities with an access component are the third most common type of strategic priority identified by Councils and activities that address equity are the sixth most common type of strategic priority. Nevertheless, when asked what their most significant strategies were to build systems, only one Council indicated that access was part of their systems-building efforts and no Councils specifically referenced any equity issues.

It is probably not unexpected that Council’s focus more extensively on impacting the quality of services over impacting equity or access. Most funding for impacting services is specifically focused on quality, with no specific state funding directed toward access or equity.