

Colorado Early Childhood Councils Quarterly Report: FY2009-2010—First Quarter



FY2009-2010, First Quarter (July 1-September 30, 2009)

March 2010

Technical Assistance: Supporting Councils to Build Systems

Since January 2009, Colorado has had a Technical Assistance Coordinator dedicated to planning, coordinating and implementing technical assistance (TA) opportunities for the state's 30 Early Childhood Councils.

Councils now have access to a graduated series of supports, ranging from TA options that are available to all Councils as well as general Early Childhood Councils system stakeholders to specific targeted technical assistance individualized and delivered to a specific Council or Coordinator. The vision for the TA system is that Councils will have continuous, "just-in-time" access to multiple methods of support.

As part of this system (see Figure 1), **ECC Systems** options include information resources that are available not only to Council staff and members, but to other early childhood stakeholders that might be interested. These include the online Early Childhood Councils Toolkit (www.ecccounciltoolkit.org), newsletters, reports, issue papers and reports posted on the CDE Early Childhood Councils website (www.cde.state.co.us/early/ECC.htm), listserv email distributions, and other web-based or electronic information.



Regional meetings for Council members and staff.

capacity and understanding of early childhood systems-building.

In addition, direct trainings and regional meetings are offered regularly throughout the year to Council Coordinators and members. The topics of these trainings are developed based on input from Council Coordinators. Identified TA needs that are being addressed through trainings and regional meetings during this fiscal year include data collection and evaluation, resource development and public engagement.

Targeted Technical Assistance is the most individualized TA option available to Councils. Targeted TA includes one-on-one coaching, quarterly check-in calls and annual site-visits from state staff who are assigned to individ-

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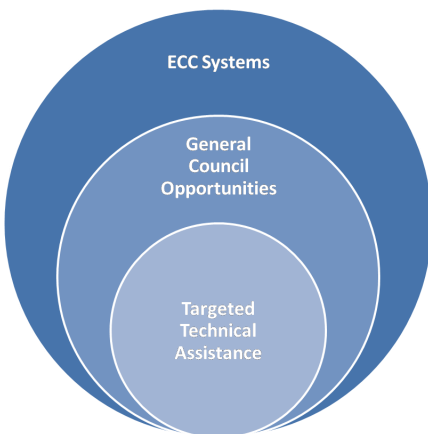


Figure 1
Technical Assistance Framework

The **General Council Opportunities** are directed to Early Childhood Councils' staff and membership. These TA supports include bi-monthly two-day Early Childhood Council Coordinator Alliance meetings, First Friday Conference Calls on specific topics of interest to Coordinators, and select webinars to support Coordinator

Special points of interest:

As of the first quarter:

- ON AVERAGE, THE TOP THREE RESPONSIBILITIES OF COUNCIL COORDINATORS WERE: BUDGET DEVELOPMENT & OVERSIGHT, STAKEHOLDER EDUCATION & ENGAGEMENT, AND PROGRAM ADMINISTRATION.
- THE THREE MOST COMMON FOCUS AREAS FOR COUNCIL COMMITTEES ARE: BUILDING AND SUPPORTING PARTNERSHIPS, IMPACTING QUALITY, AND BUILDING PUBLIC ENGAGEMENT.

Inside this issue:

TECHNICAL ASSISTANCE: SUPPORTING COUNCILS TO BUILD SYSTEMS **1**

STAFFING CAPACITY — WHAT DOES IT LOOK LIKE? **2**

Colorado Early Childhood Councils

“WE ESPECIALLY NEED HELP MARKETING THE SUCCESSES THAT CHILDREN ARE HAVING IN A SUCCINCT FASHION SO WE CAN SHARE THIS INFORMATION MORE EASILY.”

RESPONSE TO QUESTION ABOUT TECHNICAL ASSISTANCE NEED

Technical Assistance (continued)

(Continued from page 1)
ual Councils. In addition, targeted TA can involve other differentiated supports provided directly to an individual Council or Coordinator to support their immediate needs. A “Targeted TA Fund” is also available by request to help support TA needs for individual Councils that come up unexpectedly throughout the year.

First quarter reporting on upcoming TA needs suggest that most technical assistance needs are focused on either creating internal capacity within the Council as on building the foundations of a local system.

The two most commonly reported needs first quarter included requests for help with resource development strategies, followed by calls for assistance with approaches to public engagement. Regional meetings and a specific TA

day are scheduled for February and March to address these topics.

Earlier TA Days on data collection and evaluation in the spring and fall of 2009 seem to have met at least some earlier identified needs for help on these topics, as requests for assistance with evaluation and assessment are down considerably in the first quarter reporting.

In the end, what Councils should expect to get out of technical assistance is an increased capacity for both Coordinators and members to understand and build early childhood systems in their communities.

For more information about TA for Councils, contact Wendy Watson at 303-866-5939 or at wendy.watson@state.co.us.

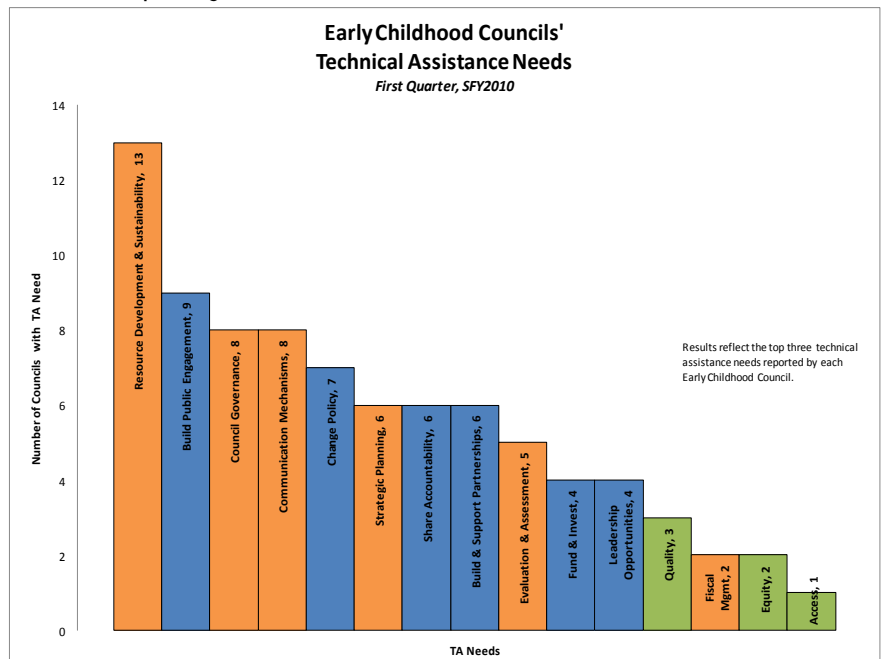


Figure 2:

Technical assistance needs broken down by Council Role area.

Orange bars indicate needs related to Creating Internal Capacity, while blue bars are TA needs associated with Building the Foundations of a Local System. Green bars reflect TA requests around the EC Council Role of Impacting Services.

“WITH ONLY ONE PAID STAFF PERSON, IT IS A CHALLENGE TO BALANCE THE WORK OF THE COUNCIL WITH EXPECTATIONS.”

RESPONSE TO QUESTION ABOUT CHALLENGES

Staffing Capacity

The core of a strong Early Childhood Council is its internal capacity. As the first of the three main roles of Early Childhood Councils (the others being Building the Foundations for a System and Impacting Services), Creating Internal Capacity has been defined as:

- Council Governance
- Communication Mechanisms
- Evaluation & Assessment
- Strategic Planning
- Resource Development/Sustainability

- Fiscal Management

Although it may seem self-evident, one of the key measures of Council capacity is staffing. State funding for Councils varies depending on the size, development and

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Staffing Capacity (continued)

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strategic priorities of each Council, but funding of at least a half-time Coordinator is required by the State grant.

For some Councils, particularly those that are newer (some just began to form in 2007), this half time staff person is all that they have to help the community create internal Council capacity, build the foundations of the early childhood system and impact early childhood services. This necessarily limits what a Council can take on and also requires that Council members play a very hands-on and active role in implementing strategic priorities. As of the first quarter, seven Councils had less than one full-time staff person, although two of these were nearly full-time at 0.90 and 0.95 FTE.

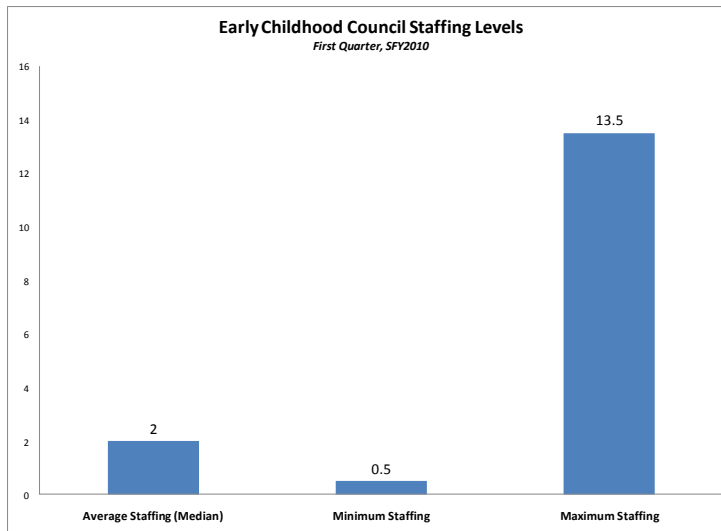


Figure 3

Staffing can vary considerably depending on whether a Council has leveraged additional funding sources beyond state systems building grants.

While some Councils are functioning with less than one full-time staff person, others are operating with significantly more than that. Their ability to grow staffing to higher levels is directly tied to their ability to diversify funding.

State grant funding for systems building is not enough on its own to fully staff most Councils to implement the strategic priorities developed by their Council membership.

Instead, Councils must use the State grant monies as seed funding to raise additional dollars. The more funding sources a Council can bring into its work, the higher the staffing capacity tends to be.

“WE KNOW IT IS CRITICAL TO BE ABLE TO SUSTAIN THE WORK OF THE COUNCIL BEYOND THE FUNDING RECEIVED FROM CDHS AND CDE.”

RESPONSE TO QUESTION ABOUT COUNCIL PRIORITIES

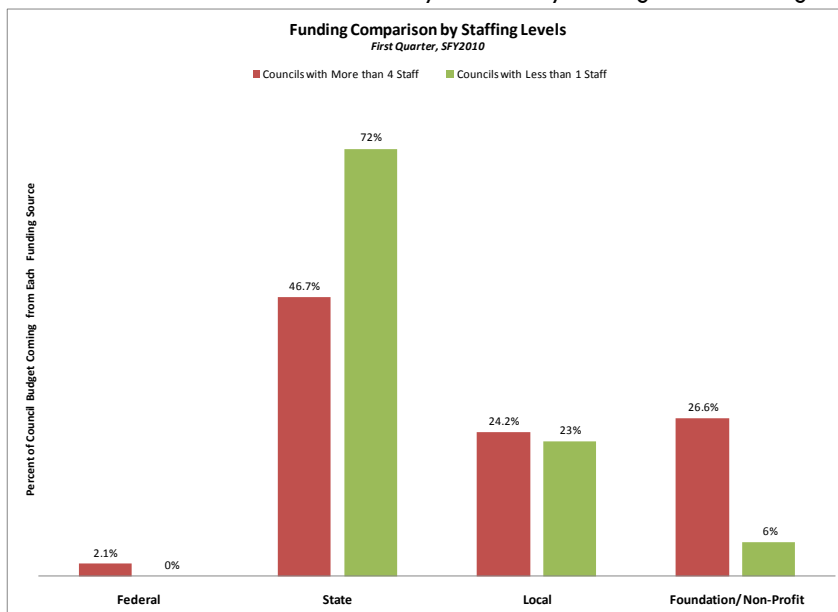


Figure 4

Councils with the largest staffs also have highly diversified funding sources as compared to their counterparts with less than one full-time equivalent staff person.

Figure 4 graphically demonstrates that those Councils with the highest staffing levels have far more diverse budgets than those with less than one full-time equivalent staff

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Staffing Capacity (continued)

“BE READY TO SEIZE OPPORTUNITIES. WE KNOW COUNCIL MEMBERS ARE WILLING TO WORK TOGETHER, TO GARNER SUPPORT AND BRAID FUNDING TO MAKE OUR DREAMS COME TRUE.”

RESPONSE TO QUESTION ABOUT GREATEST LEARNING

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person. In fact, the most highly staffed Councils receive more than 50% of their funding from local and foundation sources. It is this leveraging of state grants that has allowed these Councils to increase staffing to implement strategic priorities.

On average, Councils with less than one FTE in the first quarter of 2010 only had a little over two funding streams going into their budget. By comparison, the Councils in the top quartile of staffing (more than 4 FTE) had an average of nearly eleven funding streams each to draw on.

So, what kind of additional staff do Councils employ when they are able to increase their staffing capacity? Most commonly, Councils have hired professional devel-

opment coordinators and administrative assistants to support their work. The “other” category in Figure 5 includes such positions as accountants, data coordinators, home visitation staff, Mental Health Consultants, screening/inclusion specialists, outreach coordinators, and various types of program coordinators.

While some Councils hire early learning coaches on staff, far more contract with coaches for programs such as School Readiness, Expanding Quality for Infants and Toddlers, and other quality improvement programs they might be sponsoring.

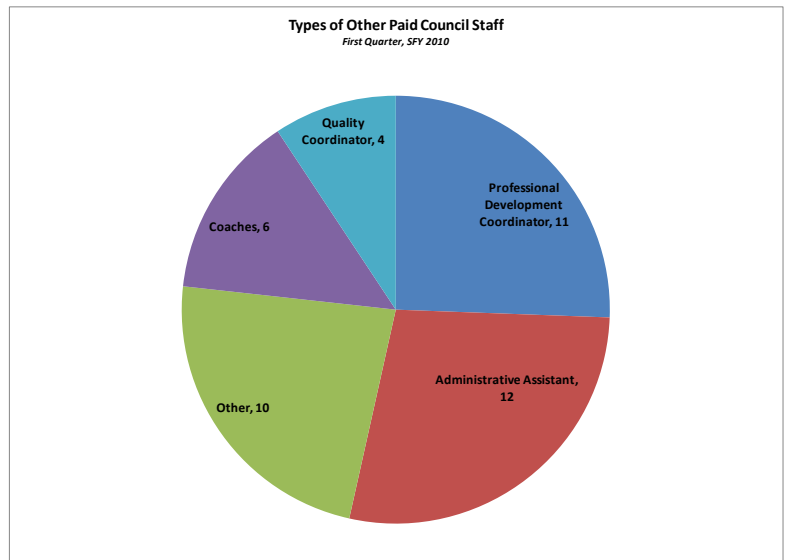


Figure 5

Professional development and administrative staffing are the most common positions that Councils add to their organizational structure when funding allows for an expansion of capacity.

Learn more about Colorado’s Early Childhood Councils at:
www.cde.state.co.us/early/ECC.htm

Colorado’s Early Childhood Councils integrate services delivered through a comprehensive early childhood system that includes quality care and education, family support, health and mental health programs. Authorizing legislation calls on the Councils “To develop and ultimately implement a comprehensive system of early childhood services to ensure the school readiness of children five years of age or younger.” (HB 07-1062)

The Early Childhood Councils program is funded by Child Care Development Block Grant/Child Care Development Funds and is administered at the state level by a partnership between the Colorado Department of Human Services and the Colorado Department of Education.