

# Colorado Early Childhood Councils Quarterly Report: SFY2010—Second Quarter

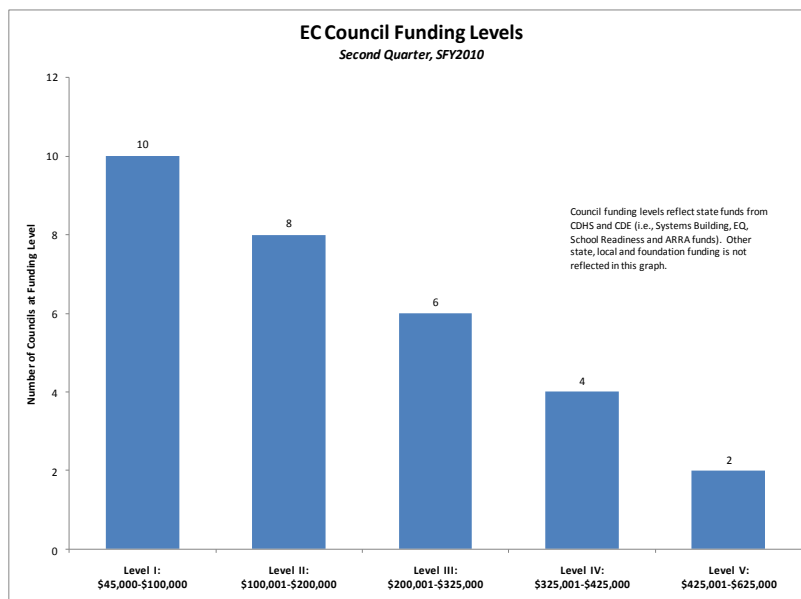


SFY2010, Second Quarter (October 1–December 31, 2009)

April 2010

## Funding Impacts Council Scale, Not Function

All of Colorado's Early Childhood Councils have been funded to have at least a half-time Coordinator. Beyond this, funding levels for Councils can vary considerably. Initial evidence suggests that this funding variance impacts the scale of Councils activities — but not the presence of those activities themselves.



State Fiscal Year 2010 funding to Councils ranges from a low of \$45,000 to a high of \$625,000.

Looking at State funding of Councils alone (some Councils leverage local funds that are not included in this analysis) grants to Early Childhood Councils in SFY2010 range from \$45,000 to \$625,000. These figures include general Systems-Building grants, as well as grants for:

- Expanding Quality to Infants and Toddlers
- School Readiness Quality Improvement Program, and
- American Recovery and Reinvestment Act funding.

While funding levels do not seem to dictate the types of

goals and strategies a Council pursues, they do impact how much a Council can take on at any given time.

To examine the role of funding on a Council's systems-building activities, the Councils have been categorized into one of five funding levels, which are detailed in the graph above.

To some extent, Council funding levels mirror longevity as a Council. Over two-thirds of the newest Councils (funded as of July 2007) are at Level I funding. Councils that initially received funding in either 1997 or 1999 are more evenly spread across the funding levels. For these seventeen pre-expansion

Councils the breakdown is:

- 7 are at Level I or II
- 8 are at Level III or IV, and
- 2 are at Level V

So what does this all mean for how much a Council can impact the development of their local early childhood systems?

It depends. If you look at staffing levels, the impact is clear. Councils that receive larger state grants are able to have a more robust staffing structure. On average, Councils with the lowest State grant funding levels have less than one full-time

*(Continued on page 2)*

Special points of interest:

**As of the second quarter:**

- COUNCILS HAD COMPLETED 59 IDENTIFIED STRATEGIC PRIORITIES AND HAD 125 IN-PROGRESS
- THE STRATEGIC PRIORITY BREAK-DOWN BY DOMAIN WAS:
  - EARLY LEARNING: 21%
  - HEALTH: 17%
  - FAMILY SUPPORT: 19%
  - MENTAL HEALTH: 17%
  - CROSS-DOMAIN: 26%

Inside this issue:

SCALE VS. FUNCTION: THE IMPACT OF FUNDING	<b>1</b>
REGIONAL MEETINGS REACH MEMBERS STATEWIDE	<b>3</b>
COUNCIL ACCOMPLISHMENTS	<b>4</b>

# Colorado Early Childhood Councils

“WE ARE IN THE PROCESS OF FACILITATING A SUSTAINABLE SCREENING SYSTEM THAT INCLUDES LOCAL HEALTH CARE PROVIDERS, LICENSED HOME AND CENTER PROVIDERS, AND OTHER NONTRADITIONAL SCREENING SITES.”

COUNCIL REPORTING ON CROSS-SYSTEM ALIGNMENTS

“TWO LOCAL PARENTS TRAVELED TO DENVER AND TESTIFIED BEFORE THE LEGISLATURE ABOUT THE COLORADO PRESCHOOL PROGRAM.”

COUNCIL EXAMPLE OF EARLY CHILDHOOD LEADERSHIP

## Funding Impacts (continued)

(Continued from page 1)

equivalent staff position, while Councils with the highest levels of State grant funding have between five and thirteen full-time equivalent staff (Note: These higher staffing levels indicate the Council’s ability to leverage multiple additional resources).

Not surprisingly, those Councils with higher State grant funding levels are also able to afford to pay their Coordinators higher salaries. This often results in Councils being able to hire Coordinators with Bachelor’s and Master’s degrees that tend to have existing skills to advance the complex work of building collaboration. Currently, 100% of Funding Level IV and V Councils have Coordinators with Bachelor’s or Master’s degrees, compared with 72% of Level I and II Councils.

Despite the fact that State grant funding levels clearly have an impact on the size and structure of Council staffing, these levels do not seem to strongly affect the types of systems-building activities Councils are focusing on. That is the funding levels are impacting the scale (and probably the reach) of systems building in a community, but they do not appear to be taking these lower funded Councils

off track of their missions to coordinate early childhood services for families.

This is good news for early childhood systems in general. It means that even the state’s newest and most minimally funded Councils are able to do some level of

State Grant Funding Level	Average Council Staffing	Average Coordinator Pay
Level I	0.87	\$41,467
Level II	2.05	\$48,461
Level III	3.37	\$49,908
Level IV	4.51	\$52,375
Level V	9.25	\$62,226

work around the key elements of coordinating a system of early childhood services for children and families in their communities.

For instance, one of the core foundations of systems building that is identified by the Early Childhood Colorado Framework is “generating leadership opportunities.” In this area, Councils funded at a Level I or II actually report more leadership-building activity per council (7 and 5 instances each) than do their higher funded counterparts (2-3 instances each). This makes sense, considering that these typically younger Councils are at a developmental stage where growing new early childhood leaders is crucial to Council success.

Similarly, the lower-funded Councils report higher levels of other “foundational” activities as well, including:

- Taking positions on bills, rules or policies;
- Forming inter-agency partnerships; and
- Aligning functions across agencies.

On average, Level I Councils initiated 2.5 such activities each during the second quarter, while Councils funded at Levels II-IV averaged less than one such activity each during the same time period. Only the two Level V Councils came close to the lower funded Councils at an average of just over 2 of these kinds of activities each.

There are a number of reasons why the younger and more minimally funded Councils might be reporting more activities focused on building the foundations of a local system. With less money available to invest in programmatic efforts, they may be focusing their energies on these key areas of systems building that will form the core of their functions — not to mention that these foundational activities cost very little money outside of staff and member time and effort. In addition, many Level I and II funded Councils are benefiting from more than a decade of lessons from the older (and often higher-funded) Councils that tell them to build the foundations of collaboration and systems integration first. And finally, the higher num-

(Continued on page 3)

# SFY2010, Second Quarter (October 1-December 31, 2009)

## Regional Meetings Reach Council Members Statewide

### Early Childhood Systems Paradigm Shift

<u>Program Approach</u>	<u>System Approach</u>
Single agency focus	Coordination, collaboration, and integration
Interagency competition/turf	Joint strategic decisions
Focus on a specific population	Builds supports for all young children and families
Impact immediate needs	Planned investment in early childhood
Starts and stops	Ongoing and sustainable
Leadership linked to position	Leadership as a process for engagement

12.2.2009 Wendy Watson

who did participate overwhelmingly reported that the meetings were beneficial to ongoing Council work.

One of the most important elements of the meetings was a discussion of a “paradigm shift” from taking a programmatic approach to

early childhood work to taking a more “systems approach” to the work. Participants discussed a model of this shift (see graphic) and 100% of them identified this portion of the meeting as being particularly helpful.

More regional meetings were planned for February of 2010 to focus on resource development and sustainability for Councils.

**“NO ONE AGENCY OR ORGANIZATION IS DOMINANT. WE NEED EACH OTHER TO MAKE OUR SYSTEM WORK.”**

*COMMENT FROM A PARTICIPANT AT THE OCTOBER 2009 REGIONAL MEETINGS*

Fifty-seven people attended the first round of Regional Meetings conducted for Colorado’s Early Childhood Councils in SFY2010. Held in Brush, Glenwood Springs and Pueblo, the meetings kicked off a forum for technical assistance that is intended to reach not only Council Coordinators, but Council members as well.

- focused on several goals:
- Networking and sharing lessons across Councils
  - Improving understanding of early childhood systems building
  - Identifying the differences between systems versus program approaches
  - Engaging partners from all four domains.

Almost three-quarters of all 30 Early Childhood Councils were represented at these October 2009 meetings, which

Although H1N1 and weather conspired to reduce attendance levels below what was initially anticipated, those

## Funding Impacts (continued)

(Continued from page 2)  
 bers of foundational activities reported by the lower-funded Councils might simply reflect a difference in reporting style or focus of these mostly new Councils.

In the end, all Councils could do more with more money.

Their scale and reach could increase and their ability to programmatically fill gaps in the early childhood system would improve. Given current funding, though Councils are focusing on the core activities of collaboration and system integration — and this is benefiting children and

families across Colorado by reducing duplications, growing early childhood leadership, and improving the quality of the services that do exist.



## Council Accomplishments Highlight Systems Building

“WRITING AND RECEIVING THE COLORADO HEALTH INTEGRATION GRANT BROUGHT MORE STAKEHOLDERS TO THE TABLE AND HELPED BUILD STRONG PARTNERSHIPS IN THE COMMUNITY.”

RESPONSE TO QUESTION  
 ABOUT COUNCIL  
 ACCOMPLISHMENTS

Between October 1 and December 31 of 2009, there were 940 active members of Early Childhood Councils across Colorado. Nine hundred and forty individuals collaborating to make services for young children and their families better and easier to find and access.

During this time, Councils identified some common themes around which they experienced significant accomplishments. The “word cloud” above highlights some of the most common words Councils used to describe their accomplishments. The larger the words, the more frequently they appeared in the Councils’ narratives.

Some of the big ones include:

- Community/members
- Strategic planning
- Health
- College/course
- Funding



A closer look at the narratives reveals that a third of Councils identified accomplishments related to **building partnerships**. Most of these Councils brought new partners to the table either with the joint development of a grant proposal or by hosting community events of interest to a range of early childhood stakeholders.

Just as many Councils also reported that they were able to improve **public engagement** in early childhood issues or the Council itself. This typically took the form of events or tools (e.g., newsletters, presentations)

that allowed Council partners to jointly articulate common goals for early childhood in the community.

And almost a full third of Councils said they are seeing success in impacting the **quality** of early childhood services. This included successful professional development activities — including Expanding Quality for Infants and Toddlers classes, and Pyramid Plus training. It also included scholarships for early childhood professionals and quality improvement grants to early learning providers.

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