

Build Your Early Learning Community



Every Early Learning Community is unique. There is no one-size-fits-all design. Each community will choose the actions that fit their community best. However, there are steps your community should take as you begin your journey that will give you a strong foundation and help sustain your efforts into the future.

1

Assemble stakeholders with an interest in early childhood

Identify community champions for kids (that might be you!) and bring them together with system leaders, service providers and funders. Ensure that representation is equitable and inclusive of parents and other caregivers, and community members with many different backgrounds and experiences, including neighborhoods, socioeconomic statuses, sexual orientations, abilities, races and ethnicities.



2

Designate a point person

This person will convene the community and stakeholders, facilitate conversations and decision-making, keep the group focused on the vision and build relationships among community stakeholders. The point person will also coordinate efforts to identify potential funding sources to support specific actions and initiatives, and for longer-term investment in early childhood.



3

Assess your community's progress

Use the Progress Rating Tool to assess how well your community is progressing toward each of the targets of the building blocks. Be sure that your assessment reflects the experience of different population groups within the community, by reviewing data broken down by various groups, and by asking members of various population groups to share their experiences and perspectives.

Focus on equity and closing gaps. This will help you identify where additional investments or coordination are needed.



Are you leading the work of becoming an Early Learning Community? One "Community Lead" can be designated to build an action plan. If this should be you, apply to be an Early Learning Nation lead in your community.



4

Develop an Action Plan

By being as specific as possible about planned action steps, timeline, budget and who is responsible, you'll be better positioned to advance to a higher level. As you create your Action Plan, be clear about your desired results, how you will know if you are making progress and how you'll gauge the difference your efforts are making.



5

Check in with parents and other important stakeholders to find the best solutions

Engage parents, service providers and community residents in developing and reviewing plans to move your community to a higher level. Parents in the community, and especially parents in underserved communities, will be your best partners in finding and implementing solutions that work for them. They should be invited and engaged at every point along the way.

6

Regularly review your process

Using the Progress Rating Tool, continue to review your community's status as you take actions and make progress. Determine where your community wants to go next and assess what actions are needed to move to the next level.



WELCOME

The Early Learning Community Action Guide and Progress Rating Tool are joint projects of the National League of Cities (NLC) and the Center for the Study of Social Policy (CSSP), with generous support from the Bezos Family Foundation.

CSSP and NLC are working with networks of cities and counties to achieve the vision of the United States becoming an Early Learning Nation made up of communities that prioritize kids and families and promote learning and development for early and lifelong success.

Learn more at www.earlylearningnation.com