

**TABLE OF CONTENTS**

**Abstract ..... 1**

**Objectives and Need for Assistance ..... 2**

    Introduction..... 2

    Current Profile of Children, and Families with Young Children..... 6

    Quality and Availability of Early Learning Programs and Services ..... 7

    Current Status of School Readiness and Early Learning Standards ..... 12

    Current Status of Professional Development for Providers and Teachers ..... 14

    Current Status of Data Systems ..... 17

    Summary of Needs ..... 20

    Goals and Objectives ..... 23

**Approach ..... 25**

    Council Structure ..... 25

    Goal 1 – Shared Governance & Implementation of Early Learning Plan ..... 28

    Goal 2 – Professional Development System ..... 41

    Goal 3 – Early Learning Standards ..... 48

    Sustainability Plan ..... 53

**Staff and Position Data ..... 55**

**Organizational Profile ..... 56**

**Third Party Agreements ..... 59**

**Budget Justification ..... 60**

## **ABSTRACT**

Washington State’s Department of Early Learning (DEL) requests \$1,542,064 in American Recovery and Reinvestment Act (ARRA) funding to support the operations and activities of its Early Learning Advisory Council (herein referred to as the “Council”). ARRA funding will be used to pursue three Council priorities:

1. Strengthening the coordination role and effectiveness of the Council by:
  - a. Establishing a shared governance model that will enhance coordination, oversight and accountability for implementing Washington’s early learning system at both state and local levels; and
  - b. Overseeing finalization and implementation of a comprehensive statewide early learning plan, including fulfilling advisory responsibilities as contained in section 642B of the Head Start Act
2. Creating an implementation plan for a comprehensive, statewide, integrated system of preparation and professional development for early learning professionals and school staff working with families and children birth through third grade
3. Implementing state-wide early learning standards by:
  - a. Promoting and providing training for widespread use of Washington’s Early Learning and Development Benchmarks; and
  - b. Development and implementation of WaKIDS, Washington State’s pilot kindergarten readiness assessment process.

## **OBJECTIVES AND NEED FOR ASSISTANCE**

### **Introduction**

Washington State is poised to make a significant difference in the lives of its youngest citizens. In recent years, strategic steps have been taken, setting the stage to create a world-class early learning system that supports all children to grow, thrive and become healthy, productive adults.

Among the most important of these steps is the establishment of the state's Department of Early Learning (DEL). Created by Governor Chris Gregoire in July 2006, DEL is the first Cabinet-level agency of its kind in the nation. DEL's work focuses on children's earliest years of life, offering information and resources for children's first and most important teachers – parents. Overseeing programs and resources that used to be administered by separate state agencies, DEL creates the structure for greater alignment among early learning services. With almost half a million children in Washington ages birth to six, DEL has a tremendous opportunity to prepare all of our youngest citizens for success in school and life.

Several other accomplishments contribute to Washington's foundational work in creating a comprehensive early learning system:

*The Kids Matter framework* - Completed in 2005, *Kids Matter* outlines a framework that supports the efforts of local and state stakeholders to coordinate, collaborate and integrate efforts that will lead to children being healthy and ready for school. This plan identifies specific achievable outcomes within four goal areas: access to health insurance and medical homes; mental health and social-emotional development; early care and education/child care and

parenting information and support. Cutting across and integrated within each of these is a family support approach to achieving outcomes within the four goal areas. By offering a common vision, opportunity for integration, defined high priority common outcomes and a way to assess progress, partners in early childhood efforts can collectively change the health, well-being and school readiness of children in Washington State.

The framework was developed through the active participation of early childhood stakeholders at the community, local, and state levels and is based upon three on-going system-building initiatives— The Early Childhood Comprehensive Systems Grant within the Washington State Department of Health, the Build Initiative, and the Head Start–State Collaboration Office.

*The Washington Learns Steering Committee* was created by the Washington State Legislature in 2005 and co-chaired by Governor Chris Gregoire. The committee conducted a top to bottom, 18-month review of Washington’s entire education system, its structure and funding. To ensure a broad cross-section of ideas and expertise, Governor Gregoire assembled a diverse group of business, community, education, government and minority leaders from all across Washington to create this roadmap for building a world–class education system that prepares all Washington students to succeed in today’s global economy. The recommendations in the Washington Learns 2006 final report will fundamentally change educational expectations, delivery and results, creating a new seamless P-20 (pre-K through age 20) education system for Washington State students.

*Thrive by Five Washington* – created in 2006 through state legislation, Thrive by Five Washington is a public private partnership that brings together partners and resources from both sectors to advance the development and learning of children ages birth to five. The vision of

Thrive is for ALL children in Washington State to be prepared to succeed in school and thrive in life.

Thrive by Five Washington is a 501(c)3 that works in close partnership with DEL, as well as with many other partners in the early learning arena. Although the focus of Thrive is on children birth to age 5, the organization supports efforts to extend positive development into the early elementary years, and thus, also partners with the Office of the Superintendent of Public Instruction (OSPI) and the K-12 system. The partnership between DEL, Thrive by Five and OPSI is currently being further developed and defined to maximize the potential impact of its joint collaborative leadership (see approach section for more on this key partnership).

*State advisory council and a draft early learning plan* – In 2007, the Washington State legislature created our state’s advisory council, the Early Learning Advisory Council (herein referred to as “the Council”). Representatives from around the state meet regularly to provide input and recommendations to the Department of Early Learning so our strategies and actions are well-informed and broadly supported by parents, child care providers, health/safety experts and interested members of the public. In that same year (2007), the legislature charged DEL and the Council to jointly develop a long-range early learning plan to ensure school readiness for all children in the state. That plan, the culmination of more than two-years of work by DEL, the Office of the Superintendent of Public Instruction, the Thrive by Five Washington, and comments collected from more than 1000 groups and individuals, was submitted in draft form to Washington State Governor Chris Gregoire on December 1, 2009 along with a list of recommendations and proposed actions for the 2010 state legislative session. Together the “Plan for the Washington Early Learning System” (herein referred to as the early learning plan or “ELP”) and “Recommendations to the Governor for Action 2010” urge the immediate creation

of a phased-in, comprehensive system of care, education, supports, and services that address the entire range of a child's early learning needs from prenatal through third grade. In particular, the *ELP* seeks to define a path for school readiness by defining outcomes in five focus areas: Ready and Successful Children, Ready and Successful Parents, Families and Caregivers, Ready and Successful Early Learning Professionals, Ready and Successful Schools, and Ready and Successful System and Communities.

In summary, the formative initiatives described above demonstrate that early learning is a top priority in our state. Together they provide solid ground for Washington to move forward on further developing our state advisory council so that it can successfully lead coordination efforts to implement a comprehensive statewide plan for early learning. We propose to use ARRA State Advisory Council funds to strengthen the overall role of the Council, and help the Council and DEL address systemic shortcomings or "gaps" that are clearly identified in our draft early learning plan. These gaps have been consistently noted in the recommendations of all the fore mentioned planning efforts. These systemic shortcomings left unresolved threaten the outcomes sought by planners. A summary of the ELP initial needs assessment including the current state of early learning services, its assets, needs and gaps follows below.

## **Current Profile of Children, and Families with Young Children**

Children - Children age 0 to 9 years old now number 859,727 in Washington. The state projects that by 2030 there will be 1.06 million children ages 0 to 9 years. Sixty-two (62) percent of children in our state under age five are white, and 38 percent are children of color. Sixty-five (65) percent of children in the K-12 public schools are white, and 35 percent are children of color.

Families and Poverty – Children of unmarried mothers in our state now account for 33 percent of all births. One-third of all single mothers with children under age 18 live below poverty, as compared to the overall statewide poverty rate of 11 percent. Eighteen percent of children under 18 years live in households receiving Supplemental Security Income (SSI), cash public assistance income or food stamps (U.S. Census, 2008).

Health - The rate of infant mortality (children who died before reaching their first birthday) is 5.1 per 1,000 live births (3-year average for 2004-06). Just over 6 percent of babies born each year have low birth weight. Low birth weight is associated with a variety of later health problems. State data indicate that 14 percent of all children have special health care needs. The three leading diagnostic categories among children served in the state's special health care needs program are: developmental delay and mental retardation, congenital anomalies and perinatal conditions. The state Department of Social and Health Services (DSHS) estimates that up to 75,000 Washington children are uninsured, even though many of them are eligible for the state health insurance program—Apple Health for Kids. Coordination between DEL and DSHS is critical to ensure that children's health , safety and other basic needs and resources are integrated into a comprehensive early learning system.

## **Quality and Availability of Early Learning Programs and Services**

Licensed Care - There are 7,449 licensed and 95 exempt (mainly school age care) early learning facilities serving approximately 174,000 children in Washington State. Nearly 35,000 child-care providers and early learning teachers work with children in these facilities.

Licensed care includes centers, preschools, nursery schools, and “family child care” in which a caregiver is licensed to serve a small group of children in the caregiver’s home. Between 2002 and 2007, the overall number of licensed facilities declined by 13 percent. This is mainly due to a decline in the number of family child-care businesses. As of 2007 there were a total of 119,553 “slots” for children in centers, preschools and nursery schools in Washington, and 47,357 slots in family child care (WSCCR&RN, 2008).

Many parents choose to put their children in the care of people they know and trust who are not licensed caregivers. This care option is referred to as family, friend, and neighbor (FFN) care. Nearly half a million Washington State children ages birth through 12 years spend some time each week in FFN care. The form of outside care that parents choose differs by the child’s age. Generally, infants and toddlers spend the greatest proportion of non-parental care hours per week with FFN caregivers (Human Services Policy Center, 2003).

Children in Early Learning Settings - DEL’s parent survey (2008) found that for children younger than 6 years, half are cared for only by a parent or guardian on a regular basis. The second largest group is in center-based care.

In a survey DEL conducted of licensed child care providers, approximately 166,500 (15%) of children aged birth through 12 years are in licensed care. Preschoolers make up the largest percentage of the children in licensed care (DEL, Child Care Survey, 2008). However, the data

on licensed care does not include preschool programs in school buildings that are certified but not licensed.

*Child Care Cost and Programs for Low-Income Families* - Public school in Washington State begins at age 5 years with kindergarten. Parents who need or want an early learning and care program for a younger child must pay for it themselves, or find resources to support the cost of care.

The median cost of full-time care for an infant in Washington in 2007 was \$9,620 at a child care center and \$7,280 in family child care. These costs were between 12 percent and 16 percent of income for a median-income household. (Median income in 2007 was \$58,462.) A median-income household that had both an infant and a preschooler paid between 23 percent and 28 percent of their annual income for child care (WSCCR&RN, 2008).

Several federal and state programs offer aid to families receiving public assistance or have an income below federal poverty guidelines. Early Head Start and Head Start are operated by local organizations using federal grant funds. Head Start, Migrant and Seasonal Head Start, and Tribal Head Start serve 3- and 4-year-olds. 12,316 Head Start and Early Head Start children were enrolled in Washington State in 2009. Currently Head Start is funded at an average of \$8,905 per child.

Washington State's Early Childhood Education and Assistance Program (ECEAP) provides preschool, health, and nutrition services for 3- and 4-year-olds. The program is designed for families whose incomes are at or just above the federal poverty guidelines (up to 110 percent of poverty). 8,053 children are enrolled in ECEAP (2009), at an average cost of \$6,662 per child.

This funding level is lower than Head Start meaning ECEAP offers fewer classroom hours and a less intensive program. There is no cost to families participating in the program.

Both Head Start and ECEAP serve eligible low-income and at-risk 3- and 4-year-olds.

Unfortunately, there are not enough “slots” (spaces in the programs) to serve an estimated 13,579 (43%) of currently eligible children. (Note: This estimate does not take into account children being served in private pre-school or children whose parents do not choose to enroll their income-eligible children in a preschool program).

Recently in 2010, the legislature passed bills to expand ECEAP substantially to serve all eligible preschoolers. However, given the current economic climate and scarce state resources, it is not clear how the expansion will be financed. As required by the new law, a study weighing options and costs for possibilities such as making ECEAP an entitlement or a part of basic education, will be underway shortly. DEL, the Council, and the Office of the Superintendent for Public Instruction (OSPI) all will have critical roles in the success of expanding the program so that is universally accessible to low-income families.

Another option for low-income parents is Washington State’s Working Connections Child Care subsidy program. The program provides money to child care businesses and relatives who care for children while parents work. Families are eligible if their incomes are at or below 200 percent of the federal poverty guidelines, or if they are eligible for WorkFirst through TANF, or if the parents are under age 22 and enrolled in high school or a General Education Diploma (GED) program. The family pay co-payments to the child care provider on a sliding-scale. On average, 64,287 children per month are in child care supported by the Working Connections Child Care subsidy program (Office of Financial Management, 2008).

Children in School - Kindergarten as a part of “basic education” funded by the state is defined as partial-day (450 hours over the school year). In 2007, the state legislature passed a bill that begins the phase-in of voluntary, all-day kindergarten, funded by the state, beginning with the schools in areas with the highest poverty levels. The phase-in is to be completed by the end of the 2018-19 school year.

In 2006, there were 80,613 children enrolled in public and private kindergartens. There are 1,307 elementary schools with kindergarten classes. A total of 249,209 children were in first, second and third grades in public and private schools (OSPI, 2007). The number of school-age children has remained fairly stable since 1999. However, the state forecasts a wave of enrollment increases beginning in 2011, as the grandchildren of baby boomers reach school age (Office of Financial Management, 2005; SRI International, 2008).

Needs Expressed by Parents and Providers - Recent statewide surveys found that 80 percent of parents would like information on activities, events and places in the community designed for families. Approximately two-thirds of parents surveyed would like information about ways to support children’s early reading and school readiness skills, ways to help children’s social-emotional development, and how to use positive discipline. More than half of the parents want information on ways to keep children healthy and to support children’s overall development. The surveys also found that there is no one source of information on early learning that all parents trust and want to use.

A survey that included providers found that parents and providers recognize the importance of early learning, but are not as clear on the importance of learning in the birth to age 2 years

period. Many providers are uncertain about the activities they should be doing with infants and younger children to prepare them for school.

In summary, as the data and profiles above indicate, early learning in Washington State takes place in many places— at home or in the care of a relative, child care, preschool, kindergarten through third grade, libraries, faith organizations, parks, play groups and many other community settings. Early learning also is shaped by many people—parents, guardians, grandparents, other relatives, child care providers, teachers, health care providers and a variety of caring adults—and programs—including those of government agencies, nonprofits, private businesses, faith-related organizations and community groups. This variety offers choices for families according to their own values, culture and interests, and organizations to offer programs they believe are important. However, currently many of these early learning activities take place in siloed programs that have separate funding sources, program requirements, and administrative structures. Each make their own efforts to assess needs, collect data, reach program-specific outcomes, train staff and fundraise based on their individual program needs. In addition, many programs have very limited funding, and thus can only serve a small number of eligible families. Inadequate funding, lack of system-wide coordination, and limited information, creates a maze that families have to navigate, making it more difficult for them to access the services and information they want. In this kind of environment, children may miss opportunities and resources may be wasted because of duplication of effort.

## **Current Status of School Readiness and Early Learning Standards**

By the time children finish third grade, they need to have formed the learning skills they will need to put to use to be successful for the rest of their school years. Therefore, their scores on the statewide Washington Assessment of Student Learning (WASL) test indicate not only how well their early learning has prepared them, but their likelihood of succeeding in their school career. In 2008-09, 71 percent of third graders met or exceeded the standard for reading, and 66 percent met or exceeded the standard for math. But that means that more than a quarter of students are not reading at third grade level, and more than a third are not able to do third grade math. These gaps in school achievement may be explained, at least in part, by a significant number of children entering school in kindergarten unprepared, and “behind” from the start, making it that much more difficult to achieve school success.

Unfortunately, Washington does not have a statewide assessment process for children entering kindergarten. There is currently no common measure nor common agreement in Washington for measuring children’s kindergarten readiness. The best estimate available is from a 2004 statewide survey of kindergarten teachers. The teachers reported that less than half (44 percent) of children are ready when they enter kindergarten (OSPI, 2005). Only a little more than one-third of public elementary schools with kindergartens conduct their own assessments of entering kindergarteners (SRI International, 2008). Two tools used include the Dynamic Indicators of Basic Early Literacy Skills (DIBELS) and the Early Development Instrument (EDI). Many use their own measures as well.

A statewide culturally competent kindergarten assessment process is needed to better understand children’s abilities and needs as they enter school. Such information helps parents, families,

caregivers, early learning professionals, and communities to ensure that children are ready for kindergarten, and schools are prepared for their students.

DEL, Thrive by Five Washington, and the Office of Superintendent of Public Instruction are currently partnering to develop and pilot a new kindergarten assessment process. Appropriations of \$50,000 for FY 2010 and \$50,000 for FY 2011 were approved by the state legislature. This money was matched by funding from The Bill & Melinda Gates Foundation and Thrive by Five Washington. Referred to as the Washington Kindergarten Inventory of Developing Skills or WaKIDS, the project faces several significant challenges. These include achieving consensus on how the results should be used, how information is shared with families, and how to make the process inclusive of language, cultural and special needs (SRI International, 2008). Like many other initiatives, agreement on these and other aspects of the program is complicated by the absence of an effective governance structure.

While developing a statewide kindergarten assessment tool and process is critical, Washington also needs to further implement the widespread use and understanding of our early learning standards. A statewide kindergarten assessment tool will be more effective, if parents, early learning staff, providers and caregivers also have a common understanding of the skills and knowledge children should have at varying stages of growth and development. Washington State developed its *Early Learning and Development Benchmarks* in 2005 to fulfill a requirement for federal Child Care Development Fund funding. Based on research and best practices, the Benchmarks are designed to assist parents, families, caregivers and early learning professionals in determining what children at specific ages should know and be able to do, and how they as “teachers” can stimulate each child’s development across all domains. Washington hired a team of nationally recognized experts to work with state and local stakeholders to

develop the Benchmarks. The product of that work has since become a national model for many other states. Ironically, Washington now has no resources to distribute the training and supplemental materials needed to effectively implement statewide use of early learning standards.

Finally, resources are also needed to ensure that the Benchmarks and new kindergarten assessment processes work together to create a system for use of early learning standards and that overall, they align and “articulate” with the learning standards and assessment processes used in the early elementary grades.

### **Current Status of Professional Development for Providers and Teachers**

DEL oversees licensing of child care/early learning providers. A child care center operator needs to have education or professional experience in child development, and either a Child Development Associate (CDA) certificate or at least 10 college quarter credits in early childhood education or child development. A center lead teacher needs a high school diploma and some child development education or work experience. A family child care provider needs a CDA or at least 12 college quarter credits in early childhood education/development. Center directors, lead teachers and family home providers need to complete 20 hours of training listed in the State Training and Registry System (STARS) within the first six months of becoming an operator/teacher.

OSPI oversees certification of K-12 teachers. Kindergarten and primary grade teachers in public schools need a state certification in K-8 (elementary education). The teacher must have earned a bachelor’s or higher degree at an accredited college or university, or completed a state-approved teacher preparation program at an accredited college or university, or completed a state-approved

alternative pathway teacher preparation program, or hold a teaching certificate in another state and pass skills and knowledge tests.

Every five years, teachers with current certification must complete 150 clock hours of approved continuing education study and/or equivalent academic credit. However, it is common for elementary school teachers who teach kindergarten through third grade to have had only one course on either child development or child psychology. In addition, there is a separate and optional P-3 (early childhood) endorsement that teachers can apply for. This endorsement tests teachers' knowledge of content and practices important for the early years.

Current professional development efforts include:

Building Bridges. In 2006, the Department of Early Learning (DEL) in partnership with the Early Childhood Teacher Preparation Council (ECTPC) developed "Building Bridges with Higher Education." This program provides an opportunity for child care providers to meet the STARS 10-hour continuing education requirement and receive college credit at the same time. DEL pays the tuition costs so early learning professionals can afford to gain meaningful college credit that can be used for a child development associate (CDA) certificate or a two-year degree.

Career and Wage Ladder. The Career and Wage Ladder provides financial incentives for child care providers to increase their training and education. First funded by the Washington State Legislature in 2000, the program authorizes wage increments based on the child care worker's education. Participating centers pay annual wage increases. DEL contracts with 72 child care centers statewide. More than 700 child care providers have participated in this program.

Washington Scholarships for Child Care Professionals. The program provides funds for release time, travel stipends, tuitions, fees, books, and a bonus upon completion. DEL funds this program in partnership with the Washington State Child Care Resource & Referral Network. In 2006-2007, the program supported 505 scholars who took 4,755 credits towards their degrees, with a 3.55 grade point average. More than 6,000 children receive care from current scholars.

“Seeds to Success” is DEL’s voluntary quality rating and improvement system designed to offer support and resources to providers who commit to improving their facilities and the care they provide. An important component of this quality improvement model is ensuring that child care providers and teachers have access to professional development, including both hands-on training and coaching, and access to formal training such as certificate and degree programs. Ensuring that the professional development component of Seeds to Success aligns with other efforts in the early learning system is critical.

Access to Higher Education – Washington’s universities and community colleges have many programs in place for early learning professionals to pursue higher education, but there are challenges such as the lack of strong articulation, and the limited number of options for students pursuing a bachelor’s degrees in early learning/childhood. DEL’s efforts to further develop the early learning professional development system will continue to include partnerships and collaboration with the higher education system in our state.

In summary, the quality of early learning and child care depends heavily on the education, training, compensation and stability of the workforce. Yet the educational requirements for those planning to teach children birth through age 5 years and those planning to teach kindergarten through third grade are vastly different. In addition, access to professional development services

varies by program and service. Currently Washington State has *some* components of a professional development system in place yet most of these policies or initiatives are either under-resourced or uncoordinated with regard to addressing the professional knowledge, stability and diversity of employees within the system. Moreover, planners suffer from a lack of quality data about the early learning workforce needed to guide policy decisions. This includes information on individuals currently providing care as well as efforts designed to increase professional development. Clearly there is work to do to gain a common understanding of the education and instructional practice that make a difference in results for children. Effective governance could play a strong role in this regard.

### **Current Status of Data Systems**

A frank assessment of current data capacity in Washington reveals significant need. Since its creation, DEL has requested funding for an early learning information system. Unfortunately, the current economic situation has precluded further action.

Despite funding deficiencies, data-driven decision making remains a focus of DEL's leadership and an integral component of our draft early learning plan (*ELP*). Existing and developing data resources include the following:

*The ECEAP Management System (EMS)* is a comprehensive database which tracks child and program information and demographics. Information collected in the EMS is often requested by state and national researchers studying state pre-kindergarten programs or state lawmakers who use this data to make funding decisions. Local programs use EMS reports to track program requirements and compile program data for local planning.

The Human Services Policy Center (HSPC) at the University of Washington has compiled more than 500 indicators organizing them into a “P-20 Policy and Data Framework” (Brandon, Loeb & Magarati, 2009). The HSPC Framework outlines what information is important to know about students’ educational experiences and achievements across all stages of education, beginning with early childhood. The HSPC Framework and matrix of possible indicators, completed in November 2009, represents a resource unavailable to many other states. The HSPC efforts draw upon and inform the other data system development efforts described below. In addition, as a KIDS COUNT grantee, HSPC is involved in the KIDS COUNT effort to report on state-level indicators related to young children, including poverty rates and participation in preschool.

Education Research & Data Center (ERDC) – created by the legislature in 2007 and housed in the Office of Financial Management, the ERDC conducts analyses of early learning, K-12, and higher education programs and education issues across the P-20 system. The ERDC is charged with developing a longitudinal research data system that allows for the analysis of student performance and progress; disaggregating education data by race and ethnic categories whenever possible; and focusing on a relatively small core of critical questions about student achievement and transitions, using the longitudinal data base to address as many as possible.

The Comprehensive Education Data and Research System (CEDARS) and the Student

Longitudinal Data System (SLDS) are data collection and data warehouse efforts led by OSPI.

CEDARS contains data reported by school districts on courses, students and teachers.

The Washington State Child Care Resource & Referral Network collects and reports data related to child care/early childhood education availability, accessibility and quality.

*Seeds to Success Quality Rating and Improvement System (QRIS)* – Another resource already under development, the QRIS system has the potential to inform key indicators related to the quality of early learning in licensed settings.

*Efforts to Outcomes (ETO)* – as part of their work in two early learning demonstration communities, Thrive by Five Washington is developing a data system that helps services within the system track and report data on progress toward common outcomes. The QRIS pilot sites are also utilizing ETO. The results of this work will help inform decisions about how to implement a statewide early learning data system

In summary, some efforts to consolidate and coordinate data collection have occurred. Coordinated needs assessments and planning have occurred as well, especially in creating our draft early learning plan. However as we move forward to implement the ELP, building a unified data collection system will be critical to measuring the success of the plan.

## **Summary of Needs**

Based on the information summarized above, the final draft of Washington’s comprehensive early learning plan (ELP) clearly identifies three overarching “gaps” that need to be addressed in order to create an effective statewide early learning system:

### *The “Preparation” Gap*

*Less than half* of Washington’s children arrive at kindergarten with the knowledge, skills and good health they need to succeed in school. Among low-income children, only *one in four* is ready on the first day of kindergarten. (2004 survey of Kindergarten teachers) This gap in preparation often leads to a gap in school achievement ( “the achievement gap”) between less prepared students and their peers as they move through school. While high quality early learning experiences have the proven potential to provide all children with the preparation they need to succeed, Washington currently lacks the comprehensive systems needed to ensure that all children have adequate access to high quality early learning services, and that services and resources are coordinated and implemented in a manner that maximizes their potential benefit for children.

### *The Coordination and Governance Gap*

Currently, early learning services in Washington consist of a variety of important component parts. There have been a number of efforts to build bridges between existing programs, but the pieces are still disjointed and lack some core elements that make up an effective system that aligns services to meet common goals for all children.

In addition, an effective governance model is key to enhancing coordination efforts. To date, no

organization has been granted overall authority or assigned general responsibility to oversee implementation of a comprehensive early learning plan in Washington State. Moreover, the current governance environment is viewed by many as highly fragmented and acutely complex. While the establishment of DEL has focused early learning efforts, there remains a myriad of state agencies, legislatively-created councils, public-private partnerships, and local/regional coalitions that oversee various aspects of the early learning environment in Washington State. Each has its own infrastructure, lines of accountability, data collection systems, reporting functions, funding streams, eligibility criteria and leadership. In some cases, different agencies offer similar or overlapping services. All tend to be somewhat autonomous and operate within separate policy silos. Given this fractured environment, successful implementation of a large multi-year cross-sector early learning plan appears daunting at best. Our Early Learning Plan (*ELP*) designers are therefore in full agreement: Effective governance must be established to assure that the energy and resources required to implement a comprehensive plan are channeled productively and in a coherent manner at all levels of the system.

### *The Systems Gap*

While Washington has made great strides in working toward creating an early learning system of services, key overarching system supports that integrate and align all services and components within the system are lacking. A new shared governance model will address many of the core elements of the system that need to be addressed, including: increasing coordination between programs to maximize participation in services, coordinating funding and policy efforts, data collection and needs assessment processes, and other alignment strategies. In addition, we propose to focus our requested ARRA funds on Council coordination of two other components

that are critical to an effective early learning system:

- Professional Development – Washington needs resources to align and integrate professional development services across services and programs. This alignment will ensure that staff who work with children across services (licensed child care, schools, and other programs such as Head Start and ECEAP) have opportunities to gain knowledge, skills and formal training that result in high quality early learning experiences for all children across the state.
- Early Learning Standards - our state needs additional resources to implement a statewide system for early learning standards; building upon the work already completed in developing our Early Learning and Development Benchmarks and extending plans to launch WAKIDs, our kindergarten assessment pilot project.

## **Goals and Objectives**

Washington's comprehensive early learning plan (ELP) addresses the identified system gaps in a long term, comprehensive plan. Coordinating implementation of the ELP is a major focus of DEL's work and the work of the Council. As part of this ELP work, we propose to utilize ARRA funding on the following goals and objectives:

### **Goal 1: Strengthen coordination role and overall effectiveness of the Council by carrying out the following objectives:**

Objective 1.1: Establish a shared governance model that will enhance collaboration, oversight and accountability for Washington's early learning system at both the state and local levels

Objective 1.2: Oversee finalization and implementation of Washington's comprehensive early learning plan, including fulfilling the responsibilities outlined for state advisory councils in the HS Act.

### **Goal 2: Create an implementation plan for a comprehensive, statewide, integrated system of preparation and professional development for early learning professionals and school staff working with families and children birth through third grade.**

Objective 2.1 Develop final recommendations for a comprehensive professional development system.

Objective 2.2 Develop alignment between professional development activities of Washington's Quality Rating and Improvement System (QRIS) and other early learning settings/services

### **Goal 3: Implement high-quality statewide Early Learning Standards**

Objective 3.1 Revise and promote the widespread understanding and use of the Washington State Early Learning and Development Benchmarks

Objective 3.2 Support the development and implementation of WaKIDS, Washington State's kindergarten readiness assessment pilot project

Objective 3.3 Create alignment, articulation, and shared understanding of early learning standards (the Benchmarks) and kindergarten assessment processes with learning standards and assessments used in K-3

## **APPROACH**

### **Council Structure**

The Early Learning Advisory Council (“The Council”) was established by Washington’s legislature in 2007. The current statute (revised in 2010) states that: “The early learning advisory council is established to advise the department (of early learning) on statewide early learning issues that would build a comprehensive system of quality early learning programs and services for Washington's children and families by assessing needs and the availability of services, aligning resources, developing plans for data collection and professional development of early childhood educators, and establishing key performance measures.” The law also requires council membership as follows:

1. The governor appoints at least one representative from each of the following state offices:

- The Department of Early Learning
- The Office of Financial Management
- The Department of Social and Health Services
- The Department of Health
- The Higher Education Coordinating Board
- The State Board for Community and Technical Colleges

2. One representative from the Office of the Superintendent of Public Instruction appointed by the Superintendent of Public Instruction

3. The governor appoints seven leaders in early childhood education, with at least one representative with experience or expertise in each of the following areas:

- Children with disabilities
  - The K-12 system
  - Family day care providers
  - Child care centers
4. Two members of the Washington State House of Representatives, one from each caucus, and two members of the Washington State Senate, one from each caucus, are appointed by the Speaker of the House of Representatives and the President of the Senate, respectively;
  5. Two parents, one of whom serves on the Department of Early Learning Parent Advisory Council, are be appointed by the Governor;
  6. One representatives of the private-public partnership (Thrive by Five Washington) created in the Revised Code of Washington 43.215.070, is appointed by the partnership board;
  7. One representative designated by sovereign tribal governments; and
  8. One representative from the Washington Federation of Independent Schools.

The Council is co-chaired by one representative of a state agency and one nongovernmental member, each elected by the Council for two-year terms. The Department of Early Learning currently provides the Council with staff support.

#### Possible Modifications in Council Membership

Currently, the Council's membership meets the requirements outlined in the HS Act, due to the flexibility in the current state statute. For example, current members include the State Director of Head Start Collaboration. While the seat is are not dedicated for this specific representation, it

is included as one of the seven governor-appointed seats reserved for “ leaders in early childhood education” .

Thus, our state’s current statute is being implemented to meet all the membership requirements of the HS Act. In addition, to increase alignment between state and federal council membership requirements, we plan to propose revisions to the state statute to more specifically align with those outlined in the HS Act. (Please refer to activity chart)

### Council Meetings and Public Hearings

The Council currently meets on a quarterly basis. At each meeting, Council members receive updates on DEL's work and are given an opportunity to provide input and recommendations to the department.

Members of the public are welcome to attend all Council meetings. A public comment period is offered near the end of each assembly.

## **Goals, Objectives and Activities**

**Goal 1: Strengthen coordination role and overall effectiveness of the Council by carrying out the following objectives:**

**Objective 1.1: Establish a shared governance model that will enhance collaboration, oversight and accountability for Washington’s early learning system at both the state and local levels**

### Plan for Establishing Shared Governance

With the help of State Council ARRA funds, Washington State proposes to create a collaborative governance mechanism to oversee implementation of our comprehensive statewide early learning plan and fulfill the expanded responsibilities for State Advisory Council contained in section 642B of the Head Start Act. The Council, as defined by state statute, will “work in conjunction with the department to develop a statewide early learning plan that guides the department (of early learning - DEL) in promoting alignment of private and public sector actions, objectives, and resources, and ensuring school readiness.” In creating Washington’s comprehensive statewide early learning plan (ELP), planners recognized that the plan cannot be effectively implemented unless we close “the governance gap”. Through countless experiences and challenges, partners in Washington have persevered in building strong early learning programs and services across the state. After years of sustained effort, it is evident that there is no single authority that can do it all – no one state agency, no one public/private partner, no one single council or coalition – that can be effective and accountable in implementing an early learning system that achieves results for all children and families in our state. As we undertake the tasks to create an early learning system, the Council and DEL understand that to be effective

in their coordination and leadership roles, there must be a structured mechanism in place to ensure an organized, clarified, and coordinated set of roles and responsibilities of both state and local partners.

Governance for early learning in Washington will have to be an organized structure that is charged with achieving goals and requiring collaboration or integration of activities across existing organizational entities that normally have separate lines of decision-making authority. A new term for this type of governance is *Collaborative Governance*, an emerging set of concepts and practices that offer prescriptions for inclusive, deliberative and often consensus-oriented approaches to planning, problem solving and policymaking. “The essence of Collaborative Governance is a new level of social/political engagement between and among the several sectors of society that constitutes a more effective way to address many of modern societies’ needs beyond anything that the several sectors have heretofore been able to achieve on their own” (Henton & Melville, n.d.) Collaborative governance combines two basic concepts:

- ◆ Collaborative: To co-labor, to cooperate to achieve common goals working across boundaries in multi-sector relationships. Cooperation is based on the value of reciprocity.
- ◆ Governance: To steer the process that influences decisions and actions within the private, public, and civic sectors (Henton & Melville, n.d.).

The “right” structure varies from state to state. However, most experts agree that planning and governance structures for an early learning system should be developed at both the state and community level. Multi levels of involvement ensure that the governance model developed is representative, legitimate, enduring, effective, and authoritative.

The Council and DEL propose to develop a collaborative governance model built upon the

cooperation of established planning groups and efforts that are already functioning and are part of the “fabric” that already exists in the developing system. These include:

- ◆ *Local and regional community early learning coalitions* – Parents, caregivers and child care providers; nonprofit, governmental, school district, and library staff; public, business, tribal leaders; child care resource and referral agencies, and others – are deeply involved in their local communities’ early learning efforts. This involvement – and extraordinary commitment- has been cultivated and maximized because of the development and implementation of local coalitions. Currently there are 39 local/regional early learning coalitions across Washington State. Coalitions allow local communities to maximize the reach and impact of services, programs, funds, and resources. Their unique designs also allow communities to engage in local, regional, and in the future, statewide shared governance. Since 2006, many coalitions have expanded their membership bases and have built their groups’ capacities. Additionally, some coalitions have launched formal planning efforts that include drafting business, strategic, fundraising, communication, and action plans. Some have only begun meeting and formalizing membership, while others have developed formal governance structures whose operations are guided by business and strategic plans and who develop and implement projects that serve children and families. Despite working with limited funding and resources, community members have dedicated an enormous amount of in-kind staff time and resources to their local coalitions. They have made great gains in their local communities, and members are eager to link their coalitions to others in the state, as well as to engage with state-wide early learning efforts.
  
- ◆ *Thrive by Five Washington’s Demonstration Communities*– A major focus of our state’s public-private partnership efforts, Thrive Demonstration Communities are local partnerships

designed to serve as models for how a community-wide approach to early learning can improve the development of all children birth to age 5 and their readiness to enter school. In 2006, White Center, located south of Seattle, and East Yakima were chosen to be the two Thrive Demonstration Communities because of their strong local leadership, diverse populations, and community commitment to improving early learning. Each community has developed a continuum of programs for children birth to age 5 as well as their parents and caregivers. Services and programs include high-quality center-based care using the national Educare model; home visitation for expectant families; play-and-learn groups for toddlers; resources to support language development and literacy; parenting activities; and kindergarten transition programs. Both communities also are participating in the state's field test of a quality rating and improvement system (QRIS) that offers child care providers coaching and resources to improve the quality of care they offer families and children. In addition, both projects are engaged in community-wide planning, evaluation and collaboration efforts to support the developing early learning systems in their neighborhoods. Thrive Demonstration Communities receive funding from Thrive by Five Washington and the Bill & Melinda Gates Foundation. Lessons learned from White Center and East Yakima will be shared throughout the state, so that families across Washington benefit from this investment.

- ◆ *Strategic partnership and joint resolution between key statewide agencies* – . In the last year, there has been a year of significant transition within the key statewide early learning agencies: The Department of Early Learning (DEL), The Office of the Superintendent of Public Instruction (OSPI) and Thrive by Five Washington – our state's public private early learning fund. Specifically, new leadership and staff in all three agencies for the Early

Learning Partnership and in August 2009, the three agencies signed a joint resolution codifying the commitment of each entity to collaborate and work together in accomplishing key early learning priorities. (see Appendix for Joint Resolution document)

- ◆ *Educational Service Districts (ESDs)* – ESDs are regional school districts similar to county school districts in other states. They exist to provide support, coordination, staff development and other services to local school districts. As part of this role, many ESDs coordinate, participate in and/or coordinate/lead community-based early learning efforts that leverage local resources/efforts and help align early learning efforts with K-12 services.
- ◆ *The Council itself* – in creating a new shared governance model, we propose to continue building upon the work the Council is already doing, especially in its role to coordinate meaningful input, involvement and recommendations to DEL regarding implementation of our state’s early learning plan.

#### Creating Collaborative Governance Model –

We propose to use ARRA funds to fill two new DEL positions : an Early Learning Advisory Council (ELAC) Administrator and an ELAC assistant, to staff the Council and assist in leading an intensive planning process to design a collaborative governance model for the state. This process will:

- ◆ Engage all the existing planning groups/efforts described above - We propose to provide mini-grants to local/regional groups so they can participate in governance model planning

- ◆ Create/ utilize mechanisms at the local/regional level to formally connect with the governance mechanism at the state level, and that will coordinate the delivery of services, assure the effective use of funds, and provide for the infrastructure and coordinate efforts
- ◆ Create a governance mechanism at the state level that will durably provide for the oversight of the early learning enterprise and take responsibility for planning, assessment, distribution of resources and agenda setting.
- ◆ Establish stable funding stream to support the infrastructure needs of a governance system. It is recognized that building an effective, comprehensive and coordinates system will require significant infrastructure to ensure an organized statewide implementation of the ELP.
- ◆ Utilize technical assistance - In January 2010, Washington was notified that it was one of six states to receive a National Governors Association (NGA) technical assistance grant to support the development of a collaborative governance model. In coordination with state and local partners, Washington will utilize support from NGA and other national experts in assessing the best ways to build on the strengths of existing governance mechanisms in the state, as well as exploring elements of effective governance models in other states.
- ◆ Design governance model - We propose to hire a consultant to help us design a new governance model based upon the input and technical assistance gathered during the planning process.

As a result of the steps above, the state will have a governance structure that maximizes the potential of state and local partnerships and ensures a shared approach to accountability and decision-making that achieves maximum outcomes for the children, families and communities in

our state. In addition, The Council's efforts to facilitate and lead this process will strengthen its overall role in coordinating statewide early learning efforts.

Interim governance plan - Over the next 2 or 3 years while the process of developing a shared governance model is underway, it is recognized that there must be a structured mechanism in place to ensure an organized, clarified, and coordinated set of roles and responsibilities of both state and local partners. We propose to utilize the Joint Resolution and Partnership Agreement between DEL, OSPI and Thrive by Five, specifically a three year Early Learning Partnership Action Plan to serve as an interim the governance mechanism to ensure that we are advancing the priorities and strategies articulated in the ELP. The Action Plan identifies the organizational lead for each priority area and key actions of partners. The three agencies will continue to strengthen the process of reviewing, updating and revising the Action Plan so that it aligns with the strategies and priorities of the ELP; and broadly communication of updates and progress to ensure that people from all levels of the early learning community are engaged in an ongoing conversation with the Partnership so that diverse needs and perspectives are incorporated on an ongoing basis. (see Appendix for a draft of the Early Learning Partnership Action Plan)

**Objective 1.2: Oversee finalization and implementation of a Washington's comprehensive early learning plan, including fulfilling the responsibilities outlined for state advisory councils in the HS Act.**

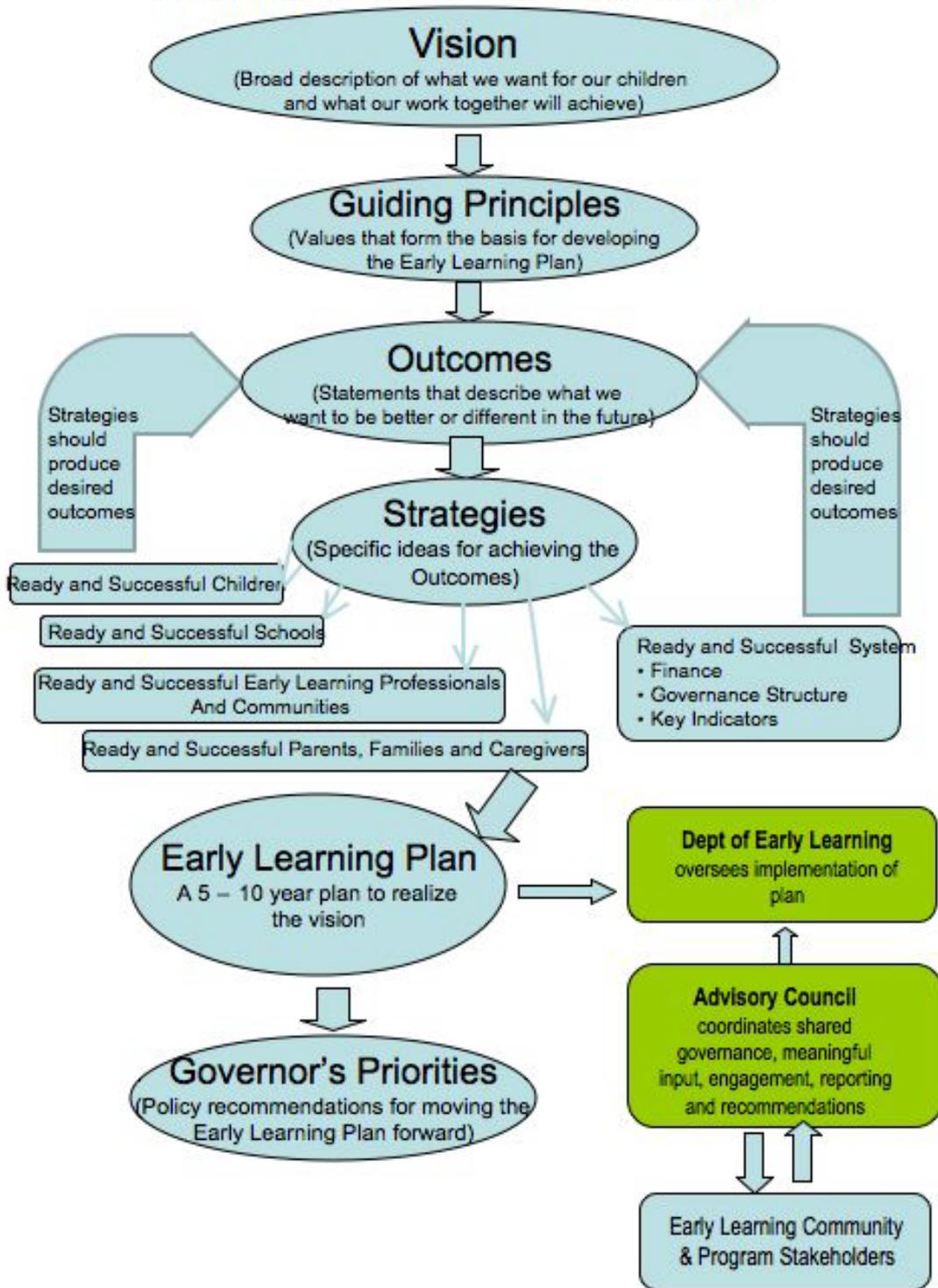
Plan for Beginning Implementation of Statewide Early Learning Plan

As the finalization of the of the ELP is completed in 2010 and implementation begins to take shape, the Council will serve as the central mechanism at the state level for providing oversight and direction to the field regarding execution and progress of the plan. At quarterly Council

meetings, DEL and its partner agencies, OSPI and Thrive by Five Washington, will provide regular updates on the progress of the plan, in addition to subsequent steps for moving forward. The proposed ELAC staff positions we are requesting will assist the Council to fulfill this role.

Overview of the Early Learning Plan – Washington’s Early Learning Plan (ELP) serves as our “statewide strategic report” (the ELP is summarized within this application) and is organized using a nontraditional construct for addressing the early learning needs of our children. It encourages breaking down the barriers created by traditional silos based on children’s narrow age ranges, old funding patterns, different types of development (i.e., physical, mental, social-emotional, etc.), and the historic distinctions between the preschool and school years. This plan includes a vision for the future of early learning in Washington, guiding principles that define the values behind the plan, outcome statements that describe the desired outcomes that we seek for children, and numerous strategies suggesting near- and long-term actions to create a comprehensive early learning system. The strategies attempt to identify those available to *all* children, parents, families, providers and teachers, those available to *some* who may need extra support, and those available to *few* for whom special programs are needed. Outcomes and activities were chosen for 5 areas of focus: Ready and Successful Children; Ready and Successful Parents, Families and Caregivers; Ready and Successful Early Learning Professionals ; Ready and Successful Schools; and Ready and Successful System and Communities.

# Washington State Early Learning Plan



The ELP is comprehensive, and includes all of the core state council responsibilities required under the HS Act, such as:

- ◆ Needs Assessment – in creating the ELP, a statewide assessment of survey of early learning service assets and gaps was completed, including an analysis of demographic trends and early learning outcome data. Periodic re-assessments are planned to measure progress toward meeting the outcomes defined in the ELP. In addition, a statewide data collection system is being explored to enhance our ability to measure progress in a systemic manner.
- ◆ Increasing participation of children in existing programs – a major focus of the plan and an outcome of effective shared governance will be increasing our state’s ability to coordinate funding and resources to maximize effective participation in existing and new early learning programs and activities. One particular focus will be on new legislation that expands our state preschool program, ECEAP. The Council will assist in coordinating final recommendations on models to implement expansion of the program to reach all eligible 3 and 4 year olds in the state
- ◆ Statewide data collection – data-driven decision making is a focus of DEL’s leadership and an integral component of the draft Early Learning Plan. In addition to efforts to share data across agencies ( ie with Depts. of Health and Social Services), we are seeking funds to build a “P-20” longitudinal data system with our partners at OSPI. The purpose of the DEL component of this grant is to have secure student identifiers that follow children from early learning programs into the K-12 system. Finally, our efforts in this area include redesigning our data system to track professional development services.
- ◆ Professional Development ( see goal 2 and objectives)

- ◆ Partnerships with Higher Education ( see goal 2 and objectives)
- ◆ Early Learning Standards – (see goal 3 and objectives)

Many of the strategies suggested in the plan are already underway, or under development and will need to be integrated into the overall system as it takes shape. Services such as licensed care, state-funded preschool, and child care resource and referral services have been longstanding in their communities and will continue as the larger system is formed. Other more recent initiatives such as Thrive by Five Washington’s demonstration communities, early literacy programs, and P-3 (school district-early learning local partnerships) demonstration projects will also be integrated into the larger whole. Some services need expansion plans and additional funding to be brought to scale, others will be strengthened from being connected through new services such as statewide data collection and professional development systems, or use of statewide tools like early learning standards and a common kindergarten assessment process. The Council will have a key role in coordinating the involvement and input of key planning groups and stakeholders, and advising DEL in its role to oversee the finalization and implementation of the Early Learning Plan.

#### ELP Implementation Activities

The ELAC staff positions we have requested to support the Council will be involved in the following implementation activities:

- ◆ Analyze feedback and incorporate changes into draft ELP – we are currently in the process of collecting feedback and comments about the plan from a variety of venues, groups and individuals across the state.

- ◆ Finalize the ELP by Sept 1<sup>st</sup>
- ◆ Update the Early Learning Partnership Action Plan to include further next steps for ELP implementation
- ◆ Create milestones and timelines for implementation, including monitoring and progress reporting role of the Council, periodic needs assessments, and processes for public input and comments on Council activities

<b>Goal 1 - Strengthen coordination role and overall effectiveness of the Council by carrying out the following:</b>
<b>Objectives</b>
1.1: Establish a shared governance model that will enhance collaboration, oversight and accountability for Washington’s early learning system at both the state and local levels
1.2: Oversee finalization and implementation of a Washington’s comprehensive early learning plan, including fulfilling the responsibilities outlined for state advisory councils in the HS Act.

Activities	Year One				Year Two				Year Three			
	Q1	Q2	Q3	Q4	Q1	Q2	Q3	Q4	Q1	Q2	Q3	Q4
<b>Objective 1.1 – Shared Governance Model</b>												
Hire positions to staff the Early Learning Advisory Council (Administrator and AA)	X											
Secure appropriate facilities for the Council	X											
Purchase materials and supplies to support the Council	X											
Make statutory changes to Council structure to align with federal requirements					X	X						
Hire consultant to assist development of a shared governance model		X	X	X	X	X	X	X				
Develop an engagement strategy to involve key partners in governance model design		X	X									
Engage BUILD and National												

<b>Activities</b>	<b>Year One</b>			<b>Year Two</b>			<b>Year Three</b>					
Governor’s Association in governance model design		X	X	X	X	X	X					
Engage key partners (e.g. FEL, TB5, Gates) in governance model design		X	X	X	X	X	X					
Engage local/regional coalitions in governance model design		X	X	X	X	X	X					
Issue grants to community partners to assist in governance model design				X	X							
Identify opportunities for and barriers to collaboration & coordination among agencies		X	X									
Design governance model.				X	X	X	X					
Create implementation plan.					X	X	X					
Submit model and plan for public comment.								X	X			
Finalize model and plan.									X	X		
Implement and promote model and plan.											X	X
<b>Objective 1.2 – Implementation of ELP</b>												
Analyze and incorporate feedback about draft plan into revised plan	X											
Public comment completed	X											
Finalize and approve ELP	X											
Create milestones and implementation timelines for each part of plan, including periodic needs assessment	X	X										
Develop Council monitoring and reporting progress of the ELP, including public input and comment	X	X	X	X	X	X	X	X	X	X	X	X
<b>Outcomes</b>												
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• A new shared governance model will result in coordinated early learning funding approach, policy guidance and common understanding of the developing early learning system</li> <li>• Finalization and implementation of the ELP will be completed in a collaborative, coordinated manner</li> </ul>												

**Goal 2: Create an implementation plan for a comprehensive, statewide, integrated system of preparation and professional development for early learning professionals and school staff working with families and children birth through third grade.**

The quality of early learning and care depends heavily on the education, training, compensation and stability of the workforce. Washington does have some components of a professional development system in place, however most policies and initiatives are under-resourced and insufficiently coordinated to adequately address the professional knowledge, stability and diversity of the workforce in a systematic fashion.

The Council will play an important role in working to implement a comprehensive, statewide, integrated system of preparation and professional development for early learning professionals and school staff working with families and children birth through third grade. This system will include: professional standards, core competencies, career pathways to degrees and P-3 endorsements, establishing an infant-toddler credential, college credit articulation, experience equivalency, integrated professional registry, and financial support and incentives so that professionals can obtain education and ongoing development, with fair compensation for attaining additional education and development. It will also integrate parenting education and engagement best practices into professional development for early learning partners working with pregnant women, and children birth through third grade and their families.

Funding is needed to support these objectives :

**2.1 Develop final recommendations for a comprehensive professional development system.**

**2.2 Develop alignment between professional development activities of Washington’s Quality Rating and Improvement System (QRIS) and other early learning settings/services**

Developing final recommendations – We are requesting funds to hire a consultant(s) to support this task, including engaging the Professional Development Consortium and completing a final report of recommendations. Convened by the Council, The Professional Development Consortium was created in response to the Early Learning Partnership Resolution between DEL, the Office of the Superintendent of Public Instruction and Thrive by Five Washington. The Washington State Legislature directed DEL and the Professional Development Consortium to report the Governor and appropriate committees of the Legislature with recommendations for the creation of an integrated system of preparation and continuing education for early learning and the school-age program workforce. The consortium is comprised of:

- a) DEL
- b) The Washington State Department of Health
- c) Educational service districts and school districts
- d) State Board for Community and Technical Colleges
- e) Higher Education Coordinating Board
- f) Office of Superintendent of Public Instruction
- g) Tribal Nations
- h) Thrive by Five Washington
- i) Washington State Child Care Resource & Referral Network

The 2009 Legislature approved House Bill 1943 which outlines specific areas that the Consortium will be required to explore and analyze. The group is charged to come with recommendations for a comprehensive plan for professional development that includes:

- Creation of a coherent system of professional development, including delineation of core competencies for early learning and school-age program staff, directors, and administrators;
- Working in partnership with higher education institutions - examining requirements for articulation agreements between certificate and credential programs, degree-granting programs, professional development programs, and community-based training programs to enable students to transition effectively between two and four-year institutions of higher education and to apply approved training programs toward credit-based learning; and
- Creation of a comprehensive, integrated registry designed to capture information, including workforce and professional development data, for all early learning and school-age programs that is easily accessible, to the extent allowed by law, by early learning and school-age program professionals, directors, trainers, researchers, resource and referral networks, and the department of early learning.

The legislation requires a final report from the professional development consortium that provides:

- an analysis of gaps in available professional development programs and recommendations for programs to address the needs of early learning and school-age providers who serve children with physical or developmental disabilities, behavioral challenges, and other special needs;

- A discussion of evidence-based incentives and supports for the early learning and school-age program workforce to obtain additional training and education;
- An analysis of evidence-based compensation policies that encourage and reward completion of professional development programs; and
- An exploration of strategies for providing professional development opportunities in languages other than English, and incorporation of these opportunities into the comprehensive pathway for preparation and professional development.

With the help of the proposed consultant(s), a final report will be submitted by December 31, 2010, outlining a comprehensive statewide integrated system of preparation and continuing professional development for the early learning and school-age program workforce.

Aligning QRIS with other Professional Development activities - Since 2007, Department of Early Learning (DEL) and Thrive by Five Washington (Thrive) have been working together to lead the development and implementation of Washington State's Quality Rating and Improvement System (QRIS), called Seeds to Success. The model focuses on four major areas:

- ◆ Curriculum and Early Learning Environment
- ◆ Professional Development and Training
- ◆ Family Relationships and Community Partnerships
- ◆ Management Practices

In FY 2010, five field test sites began testing chosen elements of the model. All sites are offering professional development opportunities, (specific to the needs of their communities), as one of the key interventions to help participants develop and address their quality improvement

goals. In total, 109 licensed child care businesses are currently participating in the field test. These businesses together serve over 3,000 children, from infants to five year olds.

As our QRIS efforts move forward, DEL and Thrive by Five Washington, in their joint partnership, have agreed to create consistency across the five pilot sites in Fiscal Year 2011 and beyond. We will work with the five pilot sites to ensure that all are measuring common elements of the Seeds to Success Quality Standards in Fiscal Year 2011, while still maintaining each community's unique perspective, strengths and needs. Utilizing the Council and its focus on coordination, we will work with stakeholders and partners to ensure that Washington's QRIS aligns with existing early learning systems, supports and resources with the goal of creating a more seamless and integrated system that impacts the multiple early learning settings in Washington. To do this, we are requesting funds to provide "mini-grants" to build local infrastructure support, coordination and development including:

- development and facilitation of cross-sector community based QRIS Advisory Groups within the field test sites
- building local capacity and decision making authority to strengthen and build upon community leadership effort

**Goal 2:** Create an implementation plan for a comprehensive, statewide, integrated system of preparation and professional development for early learning professionals and school staff working with families and children birth through third grade.

**Objectives**  
 2.1 Develop final recommendations for a comprehensive professional development system.  
 2.2 Develop alignment between professional development activities of Washington’s Quality Rating and Improvement System (QRIS) and other early learning settings/services

Activities	Year One				Year Two				Year Three			
	Q1	Q2	Q3	Q4	Q1	Q2	Q3	Q4	Q1	Q2	Q3	Q4
<b>Objective 2.1 – Final recommendations</b>												
Issue RFP to secure consultant to facilitate and staff the DEL PDC	X											
Review RFPs and select PDC consultant	X											
Hire PDC consultant	X											
PDC consultant to staff and facilitate PDC meetings		X	X	X	X	X	X	X	X	X	X	X
Consultant to provide regular updates on the progress of the PDC to the Council		X	X	X	X	X	X	X	X	X	X	X
Review RFPs and select consultant to write 2010 Legislative Report	X											
Hire consultant to write Legislative Report	X											
Consultant to engage PD Consortium members and other interested stakeholders in providing input to the draft Legislative Report	X	X										
Consultant to provide draft report for DEL, PDC And Council review		X										
Consultant to provide final draft to DEL for submission to the Legislature		X										

Objective 2.2 – Align QRIS PD activities	Year One				Year Two				Year Three			
	Q1	Q2	Q3	Q4	Q1	Q2	Q3	Q4	Q1	Q2	Q3	Q4
Develop plan to engage local communities in evolving and leading community-based QRIS Advisory Groups	X								N/A	N/A	N/A	N/A
Convene planning meetings in the five QRIS field test sites to discuss the evolution of QRIS Advisory Groups in each community		X							N/A	N/A	N/A	N/A
Provide mini-grants to the five QRIS field test sites to support the evolution of Advisory Groups		X							N/A	N/A	N/A	N/A
Provide technical assistance to the five QRIS field test sites to support the evolution of Advisory Groups		X	X	X	X	X	X	X	N/A	N/A	N/A	N/A
Collect data and information from Adv. Groups about local/regional partnerships with higher education institutions		X	X	X	X	X	X	X	N/A	N/A	N/A	N/A
<p><b>Outcomes</b></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>A plan for creating a comprehensive professional development system will be created and include integration of QRIS PD activities</li> </ul>												

### **Goal 3: Implement high-quality statewide Early Learning Standards**

The Council's work toward implementing statewide early learning standards focuses on three objectives:

#### **3.1 Revise and promote the widespread understanding and use of the Washington State Early Learning and Development Benchmarks**

#### **3.2 Support the development and implementation of WaKIDs, Washington State's kindergarten readiness assessment pilot project**

#### **3.3 Create alignment, articulation, and shared understanding of early learning standards (the Benchmarks) and kindergarten assessment processes with learning standards and assessments used in K-3**

Benchmarks - Washington State is now in the process of reviewing its early learning standards, the Early Learning and Development Benchmarks based upon comments received as a result of a call for constituent input by the Director of DEL. Once complete, we propose to hire a consultant to help promote the Benchmarks for use in early learning settings, aligning them with kindergarten through third grade education to inform professional standards and the curriculum used for professional development of early learning professionals and K-3 teachers.

In conjunction with this process, the Council intends to oversee the development of related tools, materials, and training disseminated to early learning professionals, community college programs in early childhood development, and teachers kindergarten through grade three.

Kindergarten Assessment pilot – The Department of Early Learning (DEL), the Office of Superintendent of Public Instruction (OSPI) and Thrive by Five Washington (Thrive) are

working to design and implement a pilot kindergarten readiness assessment for Fall 2010. We are calling this the Washington Kindergarten Inventory of Developing Skills, or WaKIDS. The pilot will focus on examining multiple K-Readiness instruments across a representative, voluntary, statewide sample of incoming 2010 K-students. We propose to hire a Quality Control Specialist who will oversee the contractor that will implement the pilot, using a process that includes parents, early learning providers/educators, and K-teachers. DEL has secured state and private funds to support the pilot project (and the contractor implementing the project).

Components of the pilot will include:

- Instrument selection
- Data collection/distribution
- Parent/provider/family input
- Teacher input/feedback
- Technical assistance
- Professional Development
- Summary/finding of Pilot results
- Sampling plan
- Follow-up research questions
- Quality assurance/control

The proposed sample size is 3,000 students in 120 classrooms balanced by the size, location and diversity of participating districts. Parents and early learning educators will be included in a variety of predefined methods of participation. Concluding surveys will provide feedback from all constituent groups about perceptions and recommendations. Quantitative reviews of student information will address information related to validity, reliability, efficiency, usefulness, and cost. A third-party summary of the process and products will address Pilot expectations and objectives.

Alignment of Standards and Assessment Processes –

Currently, we are working with the University of Washington to ensure that the Benchmarks fully align with the K-3 Essential Academic Learning Requirements (EALRs) used in Washington State schools. This work includes the development of a written analysis regarding how the benchmarks and EALRs can and should be aligned, in addition to a field validation study to determine the legitimacy of the written analysis conducted by the University. As a result, Washington will be positioned to begin the process of providing professional development opportunities to early learning professionals across settings to ensure all those working with young children understand the alignment of the Benchmarks with K-3 standards.

In an effort to support school readiness and seamless transitions into kindergarten for our state's youngest learners, the state Department of Early Learning (DEL), Office of Superintendent of Public Instruction and Thrive by Five Washington have awarded competitive grants to 13 school districts totaling \$117,003. These P-3 grants must be used to focus on building early numeracy, developing literacy skills, or improving kindergarten transitions, three areas considered essential to ensuring school readiness. The funding can be used for teacher release time, materials,

professional development, planning meetings and other activities that support enhanced preschool-third grade (P-3) partnerships. We propose to utilize these P-3 partnerships to provide useful feedback and input to DEL and the council as we ensure that standards and assessment processes align as children transition between early learning and school settings.

<b>Goal 3</b> Implement high-quality state-wide Early Learning Standards.
<b>Objectives</b>
3.1 Revise and promote the widespread understanding and use of the Washington State Early Learning and Development Benchmarks
3.2 Support the development and implementation of WaKIDs, Washington State’s kindergarten readiness assessment pilot project
3.3 Create alignment, articulation, and shared understanding of early learning standards (the Benchmarks) and kindergarten assessment processes with learning standards and assessments used in K

Activities	Year One				Year Two				Year Three			
	Q1	Q2	Q3	Q4	Q1	Q2	Q3	Q4	Q1	Q2	Q3	Q4
<b>Objectives 3.1 - Benchmarks</b>												
Issue RFP for Benchmarks consultant to develop tools, resources and training for communities across the state.	X											
Review proposals and select Benchmarks consultant	X											
Hire Benchmarks consultant	X											
Consultant to meet with groups and individuals to solicit feedback regarding creation of supplemental materials to meet the diverse needs of communities across the state in using the Benchmarks	X	X										
Consultant to develop supplemental materials, tools, and statewide training approach		X	X									
DEL to share supplemental materials, tools and training plan with DEL Parent Advisory			X									

Activities	Year One				Year Two				Year Three			
Group and other groups around the state through community meetings												
DEL to share supplemental materials, tools and training plan with Early Learning Advisory Council			X									

Objective 3.2 Kindergarten Assessment Pilot	Year One				Year Two				Year Three			
	Q1	Q2	Q3	Q4	Q1	Q2	Q3	Q4	Q1	Q2	Q3	Q4
Post recruitment announcement for WaKIDS Quality Control Specialist position	X											
Hire Quality Control Specialist (QCS)		X										
QCS to work with WaKIDS contractor to develop comprehensive plan for communication, monitoring and evaluation of the WaKIDS pilot process		X	X									
QCS to work with WaKIDS contractor and key partners in implementing a communications plan across Washington communities			X	X	X	X	X	X	X	X	X	X
Monitoring WaKIDS process			X	X	X	X	X	X	X	X	X	X
Guiding Evaluation of WaKIDS process			X	X	X	X	X	X	X	X	X	X
<b>Objective 3.3 Alignment of Standards/Assessment Processes</b>												
Continue to work with the UW on aligning Benchmarks to EALRs		X	X	X								
Work with OSPI to utilize P-3 partnerships to provide feedback on alignment of standards and assessment processes	X	X	X	X	X	X	X	X	X	X	X	X
<b>Outcomes</b>												
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Understanding and use of the Benchmarks will be widespread throughout Washington’s early learning environment, including its diverse settings, groups, and communities</li> <li>• A new kindergarten assessment process will be tested and evaluated</li> <li>• Washington’s early learning standards and assessment processes will align and articulate with the standards and assessments used in K-3 settings.</li> </ul>												

## **Sustainability**

Developing a plan to sustain a statewide comprehensive early learning system is a high priority for Washington and all states facing challenging economic times. In our case, we believe that while it will not be the only solution, increased coordination, collaboration and shared governance will be essential to creating an effective and efficient system that coordinates available funding and leverages combined resources.

Public agencies using a unifying policy and funding framework, in partnership, could be a significant part of the school readiness/early success in school “coordination” solution. While there is currently no overarching school readiness framework guiding early childhood and early learning efforts at the cabinet agency level, there is a foundation and progress is being made. In The Joint Resolution between DEL, OSPI and Thrive by Five Washington formalizes the relationship between significant cross-sector partners. The Early Learning Plan creates a roadmap and collective mind about what it is Washington hopes to achieve for young children and their families, and how to get there.

Recommendations in the ELP related to sustainability plans include developing:

- A governance authority focused on financing that sets the strategic direction for funding, assesses results, and holds agencies and programs accountable;
- Financing standards;
- A funding planning tool—for both public and private sector use—that can guide Washington in planning and acting toward a more effective use of funds;

- A technical assistance network for agencies, communities and programs on how to braid, blend and orchestrate an optimized funding approach;
- Attending to early learning financing systems work—developing the infrastructure, resources and leadership necessary to create a coordinated system of services and supports—is paramount to financing the expansion and enhancement of high-quality services;
- Creating an outcomes-based orientation to financing—a focus on results, which drives both funders and programs to think more realistically about the connections between investments and outcomes.

## **STAFF AND POSITION DATA**

The work of the Early Learning Advisory Council is directed by the Department of Early Learning and will be overseen by the Assistant Director of Accountability and Outcomes. Currently, Bonnie Beukema fills this position. The purpose of the this division is hold DEL accountable for results so that both DEL and its partners know the extent to which DEL programs positively impact school readiness for children, families, schools and communities. Bonnie serves as the DEL liaison to the Early Learning Advisory Council. Additionally, she oversees kindergarten readiness policy implementation and DEL's part in implementing the statewide Early Learning Plan.

### **Proposed New Positions**

We are requesting ARRA State Council funds to support three new positions. Brief descriptions are provided below with full job descriptions included in the appendix

- Early Learning Advisory Council Administrator – this position supports DEL and ELAC in planning, coordinating and implementing all elements of the Early Learning Plan (ELP) and the activities of ELAC within the requirements of the ARRA State Advisory Council grant.
- Early Learning Advisory Council Assistant - The ELAC Assistant provides administrative support related to the work of the Early Learning Advisory Council (ELAC) and the Early Learning Plan (ELP) including supporting the ELAC Administrator.
- Washington Kindergarten Inventory of Developing Skills (WaKIDS) Field Test Quality Control Specialist - The purpose of this position is to ensure the quality of the WaKIDS Pilot program in the field at the Pilot sites.

## **ORGANIZATIONAL PROFILE**

### **Designated Authority**

The Department of Early Learning (DEL) is the state agency designated by Governor Gregoire that is responsible for management of our state council called the Early Learning Advisory Council (referred to as ELAC or “the Council” in this application.) Please see the Appendix for Governor Gregoire’s letter designating DEL with this responsibility. As stated in the Staff and Position Data section, Bonnie Beukema, DEL’s Assistant Director of Accountability and Outcomes is the individual designated to coordinate Council activities. An organization chart for the department is included in the Appendix.

### **Organizational Capacity to Implement Proposed Council Activities**

The Department of Early Learning (DEL), works every day to help Washington's children get ready for school and life. Created by Governor Chris Gregoire in July 2006, DEL is the first Cabinet-level agency of its kind in the nation. The Department has responsibility for managing the Council work, as well as coordinating finalization and implementation of our statewide Early Learning Plan (ELP), and forwarding the work of the Early Learning Partnership between the Office of the Superintendent of Public Instruction (OSPI), Thrive by Five Washington, and DEL. These responsibilities fit in with DEL’s other responsibilities, including management and oversight of:

- Licensed Child Care – DEL set the rules for Washington's more than 7,400 licensed child care settings in family homes or child care centers; these businesses serve about 174,000 children. Our 85 licensing professionals around the state support child care business owners

and their staff in meeting the state's rules for minimum safety and health, and take action if settings are found to be unsafe for Washington's children.

- State funded comprehensive pre-k program – DEL funds the Early Childhood Education and Assistance Program (ECEAP), a preschool program for financially stressed families. ECEAP will reach more than 8,000 four-year-olds and their families in 2008, offering classroom learning and medical, dental, and nutrition connections that involve the whole family and help prepare children for success in school and life.
- Child care subsidies – DEL sets the rules for Working Connections Child Care (WCCC), a subsidy program that provides money to child care businesses and relatives who care for children while parents work. WCCC lets parents know their children are well cared for while they are working or looking for work. We partner with the Department of Social and Health Services, the state agency that decides who is able to receive WCCC and makes the payments to child care providers.
- Quality Rating and Improvement System (QRIS)for Licensed Care - DEL invests millions of dollars to support the quality of care Washington children receive from teachers and child care providers. From basic child development and licensing training, English language learning classes, to college scholarships, an apprenticeship program and a leadership institute, DEL encourages early childhood professionals to seek learning experiences that will strengthen their ability to spark the joy of learning in children.
- Early Literacy - We invest in early reading projects in communities throughout Washington so adults use storytelling and reading with children whose brains and knowledge of words are

developing. With our private partner, Thrive by Five Washington, we want to nurture the emerging reader in all children.

### **THIRD PARTY AGREEMENTS**

In this proposal, we plan to contract with consultants and/or other independent contractors to perform some of the work. DEL uses the State of Washington's policies and procedures for contracting. Each contract includes a statement outlining the scope of work, work schedule, remuneration and other general terms and conditions used in all state contracts. Please see the appendix for DEL's contracting policy.

## **BUDGET JUSTIFICATION**

### **Personnel and Fringe Benefits**

We request three positions: an ELAC Administrator and Administrative Assistant, and a Quality Control Specialist for a total direct cost of \$387,252. All these positions are placed in classifications to other positions in state government with comparable levels of responsibilities and duties (see Staff and Position data section above\_

Fringe Benefits reflect approximately 30 % of salaries and include medical, dental, retirement benefits

### **Travel**

Travel costs of \$52,900 include mileage and other reimbursements for staff to travel to meetings across the state, over the three -year project period.

### **Supplies**

Over three years, we request \$35,625 to purchases supplies and materials related to Council meetings, Benchmark and WAKids pilot project

### **Contractual**

As is customary in state government, we propose to contract with independent consultants to complete some of the proposed work (a total of \$448,108), including consulants/contractors to

- work on a new model for governance design,

- work with and facilitate the creation of recommendations from the Professional Development Consortium (PDC),
- write the final PDC report
- develop revised Benchmark materials, tools and training plan

In addition we are requesting \$317,064 for mini grants to communities (coalitions and other groups) to be involved in governance planning and PDC work.

### **Non-Federal Match**

The project will be supported by many millions of dollars in non-federal sources, partnerships and collaborations and investments in early learning programs across the state. We detail below some of the investments that will most closely support the work of the Council and DEL:

#### Goal 1 – Governance and Implementation of ELP

In addition to the small amount of grant funds requested, the work to complete goal 1 will be supported by:

- \$1,300,000 in private funding in 2010-2011 from Thrive by Five Washington that supports early learning coalitions in their work to coordinate planning and implementation of early learning services at the local level. This funding of coalitions will supplement the \$277,064 in ARRA SAC grant funds we propose to in mini-grants to ensure coalitions participation in the development of a new governance structure. Thrive's funding of coalitions also supports their work to implements component services that are part of the Early Learning Plan.

- Thrive Demonstration Communities – The Bill and Melinda Gates Foundation and Thrive by Five will provide over \$3,000,000 in funding to the Thrive Demonstration communities between July 1, 2010 and June 30<sup>th</sup> 2011. This funding and all the work in the demonstration communities supports the Council and DEL’s work to develop a new shared governance model and implementation the statewide Early Learning Plan. The two demonstration communities are essentially field test sites for: community governance models, coordination and collaboration between various direct services (home-visiting, quality improvements and rating system for licensed care, shared data and evaluation, as well as other ELP components such as kindergarten transition services and public awareness efforts. Lessons learned in the Thrive demonstration communities will be highly useful in informing the Council and DEL about their work to build a comprehensive early learning system.

#### Goal 2 – Professional Development Plan

To support our work to create a comprehensive professional development system, The Bill and Melinda Gates Foundation will provide \$250,000 in Washington Scholarships funds to support the tuition costs of staff seeking early learning degrees during the first year of our project.

#### Goal 3 – Benchmarks and WaKIDS

The Bill and Melinda Gates Foundation is providing DEL with a \$378,000 grant to implement the WaKids kindergarten assessment pilot program. These funds directly support DEL and the Council’s work to manage the project and report on its findings/conclusions.

P-3 grants – Recent P-3 grantees (13 school districts) will provide valuable feedback and input as we implement our early learning standards (the Benchmarks), and our new kindergarten assessment process. These grantees are focused on services to ensure preschool to school transitions in their communities, and aligning the work between early learning and K-3, including the use of standards and assessment processes. During the first year of our project, \$100,000 in private and public funds will be contributed for these efforts from Thrive by Five Washington and OSPI.

The non-federal share contributions described above represent only 23% of the total cost of our project, in the first year alone. While we do not have firm figures for contributions in future years of the project, there is a strong commitment from private sources to continue investing in the development of a comprehensive early learning system in Washington, and the services, programs and initiatives contained in the ELP.