FINISHED FILE
PDG B-5 COMMUNITY OF CONVERSATION
JUNE 10, 2019
3:00 ET

Services Provided By:
Caption First, Inc.
P.O. Box 3066
Monument, CO 80132
800-825-5234
Www.captionfirst.com

***

***

>> Well, it is 3:00 p.m. eastern time. We will get this conversation started. Thank you for taking the time to join us today. We are recording this presentation, so that way you have it for future reference or you can share with your colleagues who are available today.

So we are excited to hold another session to address new questions that you all have on your needs assessment processing. Presenting today we will have Jim Lesko, TA Lead as well as Chris Botsko, Senior TA Advisor, and I am Sami Couture the manager of the project. I know we sent you a few emails over the last week or so and I just wanted to highlight some of those for you so we are on the same page. You should have received the strategic plan guidance that came out last Monday, and we will be having a community of conversation similar to these on the strategic plan on the Monday, the 17th of June, so you should have received that. We also sent a notice that this Thursday at 2:00 p.m. Eastern we are partnering with the state capacity building center for a webinar focusing on national consumer education resources so it will provide an overview of resources to help states and certificates with consumer education information to families.

So you didn't see those in your inbox for some reason, let us know. Let your TA specialist know and we will make sure you get on those. Just highlighting that these communities of conversations are volunteer so we appreciate your time today. We will address questions that have come in. We will hear from our partners in Kentucky and Maryland about their needs assessment work and we will take additional questions from you all. You can put your questions in the chat box throughout the discussion. You can raise your hand at the top and we can call on you. All guests are muted so that way we keep the background noise low, but if we call on you, you can always hit star 6 which will unmute yourself and then we can hear you.

So we appreciate again your time, and now, oh, one more thing, we have our web page with resources available. So you may have seen that in an email from us, but here is the link as well. You can find the PDG B5 resource page that has the assessment guidance, it has tools that we have sent out. So it's all in one place for you, and here is the link. And now I will send it over to Chris top get us started.

>> CHRIS: Good afternoon to most of you and good morning if there is anyone on from Alaska and Hawaii. I'm going to go over what the plan is for today and you are welcome to start putting in questions whenever you have them. And I will start with the need assessment guidance conversation approach. So we are going to start with questions from grantees, these are some that we have already heard, then we are going to do additional participant discussion and questions as they occur to you. There are you fuse grantees that have been asked whether they would be willing to share their experience to date and we will hear from them, somewhere in the process and we will talk about the needs assessment process. Hopefully each one of you have seen the Q and A and additional information that Richard sent out that explains more details about the needs assessment process. We will go over that today.

Then we will go over the whatever the conversation takeaways are and suggestions for improving these conversations in the future, and then we will talk about upcoming activities in closing. So I will start with a few topics, like I said, if the questions occur to you, please feel free to put them in the chat box or, you know, you can also at some point unmute and we can ask questions. A few questions that have occurred and that we didn't necessarily cover in our one, one is about the target audience for the needs assessment.

The main answer is it depends on what works for you in your state. We would expect that the audience definitely includes agencies, organizations, and parent leaders in early childhood as well as policy makers. Some states may want to do a broader plan than any parent or interested party might want to pick up. Others might want to focus on a smaller audience. I would suggest that even if the plan itself focuses on policy makers and early childhood specialists it may be useful to have a summary to share with a broader audience that is a little less detailed. So just something to think about. We had a questions on what demographics you should include in your needs assessment and whether you should include them all was one of the questions.

>> In order to provide context a strong needs assessment should start with demographics of young children as a whole in your state and you want to show indicators ever vulnerability such as poverty in low income families low birth weight and that depends on your area of focus but things that show who the vulnerable children and families are in your statement. You will also likely want to show differences between subgroups, for example, race and ethnicity, possibly also rural and urban versus urban if that's something you can get in your state and a different way of looking at vulnerable populations and differences between populations.

I think it's useful to see what do the children look like in your state as we start talking about the needs assessment. It helps provide the context that is important to understanding the rest of the needs assessment and eventually to your strategic plan and why you are doing what you are doing. What programs to include in terms of number of children being served, so there is that one section of the needs assessment we were asked to report on the number of children being served to the extent that you have data on that available.

So for that you definitely want to include all of your early care in education programs. For others, and what other data you provided it largely depends on how you want to use the needs assessment at a minimum it would be useful to provide information on the number of children in Part B and Part C. You are not required to provide the number of children being served in early education programs but if they are useful, if they help understand where you are going and what you are trying to do and understand the children and families in your, it may be useful to share the information. Or that you don't have the information, that you would like to have but you don't have it and that's something you want to explore as an activity in your strategic plan.

Next defining vulnerable populations. Last time we had some questions about if you have to stick to the definition of vulnerable that you used in your application. Just to reiterate, the answer to that is no. If your needs assessment leads you to add or modify the vulnerable population, that's great. The whole purpose of doing a needs assessment is for you to take a closer look at the condition of children and families in your state or the conditions of programs. So if it leads you to modify it, that's fine.

You need to explain why they are selected as vulnerable in your needs assessment, but you don't have to necessarily say, well, this is what we said in our application, this is what we changed, this is why we changed it. If that's somehow helpful and helps to explain how your thinking evolved, that's fine but it's not necessarily. Really your needs assessment is going to be reviewed as your needs assessment alone. It's not an issue to comparing it to what you said you would do in your application.

Measurable indicators is another set of questions we have had some questions on or another component of the needs assessment we have had questions on. So one of the things was whether they could be selected and defined during the strategic planning process rather than the needs assessment process, with the idea being that, you know, as you pick what you are going to focus on, that's where your measurable indicators are going to be.

And then is that something you can definitely do. You should know what you are doing and how you plan to go about it in the needs assessment. You may want to use your needs assessment to research possible indicators and if you do it would be good to report it. If you decide to wait, you should address the needs assessment questions from the guidance on the needs assessment in your strategic plan.

You don't necessarily have to do it first, but you should look at the questions if you decide to wait and you should say in your needs assessment that we are waiting on indicators until our strategic plan and explain all of that so it can be seen that you looked at that.

Next was the facilities issue, and we have had questions about that. This is a required component of the needs assessment. So even if it doesn't come up with a specific issue in regard to community or agency input, if you are not hearing people say, well, facilities is a major concern of ours, it is still important to indicate what is known about childcare facilities in your state, and often times this may be something you can find in other previous needs assessments if that's certainly worth looking at.

If not much is known, that is something to report and finding out more might be something you want to consider in your strategic plan, but I would suspect in a lots of cases there may be local studies on facilities, there may be statewide studies. It certainly, no matter how you no matter how much the issue is brought up, one of those topics you have to cover. The same is true for transition which I think is similar in terms of facilities. Regardless of what you are hearing on the trans issue. Research shows it can present challenges. You want to take a look and see if it has been covered in other needs assessment either at the state or community level, which reminds me, no matter what, whatever your needs assessment process is, you definitely want to review previous needs assessments, and we have shared some of those. If you have any questions about, well, what needs assessments might you look at, your TA specialist can provide you with a list of those.

We can put out a list of those and we can share that, so just so you know. And the last kind of topic that's already been covered and wees that we have had is the issue of system integration. One of the goals of PDG is to encourage stronger integration of the early childhood system. That means engaging all of the key stakeholders in the early childhood, early care and education system and beyond.

One reason why the FPOs are asking you to invite different stakeholders to quarterly calls is to get a sense how you are going about this. So system integration is a big part of PDG. So that's one of the rationales behind that, something to consider, what's going on, what's working, was not working, what can you do in your strategic plan to strengthen system integration.

I'm going to check and see. I don't know if there is any questions that have come up. Is there anything in the chat box that I missed?

>> SAMI COUTURE: No, not yet.

>> CHRIS: Okay. Go ahead.

>> JIM LESKO: I thought I would add a few comments related to the issue of facilities, and this has come up as a result of looking at a few of the drafts of needs assessments that have come across our desk so far. Two items to think about concerning facilities, one you mentioned, Chris, that there may already be existing data in states that explore the concept or issue of facilities and an example would be I know that in a few states, in relation to their quality rating and improvement system, there was or has been some exploration of what are it would take when looking at an average center to raise the quality of that center the quality 2 to 3, 3 to 4 or 4 to 5, whatever rating system that states are using. And they, and several states came up with average number of what it would cost them to move those centers up.

So the an extrapolation of that calculation across the number of centers to make sure that the children that your proposing to be a part of the mix delivery system are in some higher level of quality in early care and education and what it would cost to be able to do that would be something to consider. Another calculation would be if a state is the looking at numbers of children and it's important to consider if there is an unmet need of children, does the existing early care in education system, is it at capacity to absorb the number of unmet needs, so the number of children who may not currently be in service, and if it is already at capacity, then another calculation would be what might it take in terms of additional facility spaces, centers or centers with square footage to meet some level of absorption of those numbers of kids who may need to be in a place they and currently are not.

So those are two other aspects related to facilities that states may want to think about.

>> CHRIS: I would add a third which is the question of making childcare centers more inclusive. So in terms of what facility changes, do you have any programs out there that can help a childcare center that might need to make facility changes in order to accommodate children with special healthcare needs or are there other things you can do to facilities.

If not, is this something you want to look at in terms of whether, A, whether there is a need out there, and then later on whether there is something you could do maybe in terms of a pilot program that could support efforts to build graver inclusivity t okay. Great.

>> This is a good opportunity to do a bit of a switch, and last call we had a few states that had also agreed to share some of their experiences around needs assessment, and we ran out of time and didn't have an opportunity to have those willing speakers share their experience. So I thought first before we go to some other questions, I would like to turn it over to John Rodin from Kentucky. John, I believe you are on the line. And --

>> JOHN: Yes, I am on.

>> You are on?

>> JOHN: Yes, sir.

>> Great. So John maybe it would be helpful if you could introduce yourself, and where you are from, and if you want to talk with us a bit around your needs assessment process in Kentucky.

>> JOHN: Absolutely. Thank you for having us on today and convening this group. My name is John Rhoden, project manager for Kentucky's PDG. I will try to keep it high level and then continue questions after the Kentucky physical development grant operationalized through the governor's office of early childhood with oversight under the committees established under the early childhood council p the subcommittee was prompted to take on oversight of the needs assessment, and it contains representation from major state agencies, from family services, the Department of Education, the head start collaboration director, educational work force, and part of the success we have had at this point has been through the networking both formal and informal with our state agencies, but not just at the program director level but as

well as the cabinet secretary and their ongoing participation and support.

The data subcommittee first reached consensus on definitions. The definitions guided much of our work and presenting information to our stakeholders as willing as to the executive committee and the ETAC. The primary definition is vulnerability. And we are drawing on agency definitions which focus on poverty and in the poverty income ratio used by different agencies and where they qualify for services, from there we examine agency priorities.

These are sub tables for taking a deeper dive into vulnerability. The Kentucky center for statistics at KY have been a phenomenal partner. They publish annual data from any of the topics of interest within the state so we have been able to work alongside KY stats and their stats have been part of our data subcommittee as well as each of our committee memberships. So as the members are going through examining the pieces from the needs assessment, they are able to identify the data gap analysis, maybe those and then move that forward.

>> Can I interrupt you just for a second. Some of the participants have asked if you could speak a little bit louder.

>> JOHN: I'm very sorry. I think I may have turned off of my speakers here. Is that better?

>> That's better. Thank you so much. Sorry to interrupt.

>> JOHN: I said in addition to working with KY stats we were also able to progress further from the race to the top grant in the validity and sustainability study with our implementation support team through compass evaluation and research which positioned Kentucky's PDG ahead as we were able to identify and write and procure services and Dr. Sarah Henamyer and her team have been key in identifying and having the outside look because we are developing relationships internally within the state. We also have the ability for the external overlay and to identify those content experts that help to push in certain areas. Most recently as we are going through our, the last phases of your needs assessment preparing for submission, it's able to pay back the GIS for the mapping of the data sets identifying poverty pockets, areas of childcare deserts and then making projections of where we need to move as far as on the allocation of resources and our dollars moving from this year within the budget session, but also for the next five to ten years.

I believe that Dr. Henamyer was joined as well.

>> SAMI COUTURE: Press star 6 and we can hear you.

>> Can you hear me now? Yes, I'm online.

>> JOHN: Sarah, I didn't know if there were pieces as part of our team to add in or clarify as well.

>> SARAH: We also, we started planning for the needs

assessment back in the fall when we were pulling the proposal together. So we were able to initiate focus groups around the states as well as surveys to focus specific sections of the needs assessment. We knew we wanted to do a lot of work on transitions, so getting a transition survey out there and being able to kind of hit the ground running come January, we kind of developed a plan and an approach to the needs assessment back in the fall, and I think that was also something that really helped us get started very quickly and reach out to folks quickly and get some events scheduled.

>> JIM: This is Jim. It seems like I will ask this question. Are there any lessons learned from the process that you think might be helpful to share with states that you might do differently or you do a little bit better, stronger, or you would say I would stay away from that sort of a pitfall.

>> This is Sarah, I don't know if it's a lesson learned so much as an ongoing learning on the iterative nature of the work. We learn a little, we learn a lot, we come back to the team, and Kentucky has invested in a very engaged process with its ETAC and partner agencies, so constantly appreciating the iterative nature of the work of bringing data back to the table and then being directs to drill down a little further. I think, and I will let John respond to this, I think we are getting to the point where we are getting ready to submit, but that iterative process and kind of ongoing conversation continues and I expect to keep going even after we submit this product. John, I will let you agree or expand on that.

>> JOHN: I would echo the same that Sarah was sharing, and it's one of the processes that have I have been very pleased with the team and just the stakeholders allowing the data to guide, and as we have new information and asking those questions that we are able to hone in and sharpen our understanding of the landscape. The meeting we just finished earlier today, what is the next dive, what is the next layer of information to develop policy as we are looking into the future, and we are getting closer to that time to where it's having a very solid needs assessment and strategic plan to guide the work knowing that as holes of the data may be filled in the future that we will come back and make those modifications.

>> Great. Thank you so much for sharing that. Are there any questions that those attendees would like to ask while we have John and Sarah on the line?

>> SARAH: John had mentioned this, but to the one of the questions in the chat box, we had just completed, Kentucky had just completed its validation study and in that study had the chance to do surveys with early care and education professionals across the state, and we were able to rely on that raw data to

under our understanding of professional development and feedback on technical assistance and drivers for quality.

>> JIM: Great. Thank you so much. I know that it is interesting to explore some of the areas in question that states have decided to focus in their needs assessment process while work force was not necessarily a targeted domain as part of the needs assessment, I know that there were a number of states that have included practitioners, professionals, and the issue of professional development in the work force. As a part of their needs assessment exploration and data in their states. So we did have a question from Debra Anderson about states have, are any states conducting a provider survey to assess gaps in professional development?

So it sounds like Kentucky has done that. If there are other states as well, as soon as Sarah and John are done, that would be willing to share some of that survey process with us today on the phone, I'm almost positive there is a couple of other states that would be interested in hearing what you have done. Well, thanks so much, John and Sarah. We on behalf of PDT, we thank you very much for being willing to come on the phone today and share.

>> SARA: Absolutely.

>> JOHN: Thanks so much.

>> CHRIS: So I think one of the things we would like to do is open it up. Has anyone done a survey that is designed to address gaps in professional development or assess issues related to professional development even if it is not targeting. If you do, press star 6 and let us know about it.

Leslie see that Louisiana has a lead teacher survey that assesses professional development. Multiple attendees are typing. I was going to say, Leslie, would you be willing to talk about how you arrived at the questions you created or that were created for the teacher survey. I know that that, and or Tracy, I saw Tracy from Alabama indicated that they do a survey once a year. And a question we have received in a few cases from states is can we share examples of the types of surveys that states are using? I know that they want to specifically look at questions, but out of my own curiosity, I'm always interested in how states arrive at the questions that they decide to use.

I'm sorry to put you on the spot. If there is anybody else besides Leslie, that also would be willing to share that information, I think some of your colleagues would be interested. Leslie said she is dialing in and Tracy said Alabama will share the survey. And we will get ahold of you to see how to get ahold of the survey. While we are waiting for Leslie to sign in, I know we had a couple other questions came in online prior to our call today. And one of those questions that was asked is what sort of guidance is out there concerning the number of needs assessments that they should be looking at from providers across the state? And I'll start first. I don't think that there is a set number of needs assessments. I would say if you are aware that there is other reports that have been completed, I would try and gather as many as you can. It's better off doing an aggregate or qualitative analysis of reports and reaching conclusions that you can put into your needs assessment rather than overlook something that may sort of skew the data or send you in in a different direction.

So I know at least two states that I have worked with. They have been feeling in essence somewhat overwhelmed by the number of pieces of data that they brought into the needs assessment process and have had to strategize around the capacity of their own system, you know, within themselves as a team to sort of weed through the number of reports and data that they have so that they can target the most salient pieces of information to bring together for the needs assessment. Chris, did you have any other guidance to offer?

>> CHRIS: No, I think that that's right. It's good to try and get as much as you can. There is a variety out there. There is the McVee needs assessment there is the state maternal and child health needs assessment, so kind of getting variety and kind of looking at them, looking at conclusions and the data. It may be that in some cases especially if they are really recent, they may have done some of the work that you need to do, and that always making things easier even if it takes time to process all of those questions.

And I know Leslie is now on, so if you could, if you haven't hit star 6, if you could do that and we could hear from you about your experience from the LEAD teacher survey.

>> LESLIE: I'm on, can you hear me? So our lead teacher survey is sent to all teachers, all LEAD teachers of early childhood settings funded by public funds, and the things that we cover, we have specific buckets that are highlighted and perfectional development throughout those buckets. So specifically the tools we focus on, class, GOLD, our assessment piece, and curriculum.

And then we break it down even further and if you are a childcare, we ask about your experience and your professional development with your childcare resource and referral agencies, and also the PD that they take with the our lead agencies. And we use the results from the survey along with our family survey, and they are calculated and we receive a score for the community network performance profile that is put online.

So each site has their own performance profile with their, with their class scores and then each community network which in most cases is the school system also receives score and part of the score is based on results from the leadteacher survey.

So it helps us get more participation because the districts or our lead agencies will want to make sure that their teachers respond to the survey.

>> JIM: Leslie, is the survey sent out online or is it paper and how has been your response rate?

>> LESLIE: We sent it out. We used the email addresses that teachers enter for their classroom on TS GOLD, and we send out an email blast to all of those lead teachers and then with a link to the survey. So it's an online survey and we also send it to our lead agencies and have them send reminders to make sure their teachers are taking it, and midway through I look at the survey to see which districts or which lead agencies had fewer than a certain number of responses and contacted those lead agencies to incentivize them to get teachers to respond. And we also sent them to childcare providers. We have a listserve with that.

>> JIM: And has your response been pretty good.

>> LESLIE: I think I have about 3,000. It's a little bit of a dip from last year, and I think some of the email addresses were getting, some of the responses were getting kicked back, so either the email was not accurate or a teacher might have switched roles, but the site was still using that email address to get into GOLD. So we might look and see about finding another way to do it next year or to clean up the email addresses we have in GOLD.

>> JIM: Great, thank you for coming online. Sorry to put you on the spot, but I do appreciate the information.

Anybody else have any questions for Leslie while we have her online? I'm not seeing anything. Thanks so much, Leslie for coming on. I appreciate it. So before we move on to other questions, and I want to make sure that we get to our other state, Chris, Rachel Demma from Maryland is also on the line today, and Rachel is the director of the PDG program for Maryland and just sort of to give you a little preface here, Rachel -- Maryland has done a very unique, I think, activity and established a comprehensive, I think, approach to focus groups reaching out to the local community. So, Rachel, hopefully you are on. Can you talk to us about what approach you are taking in your state.

>> RACHEL: Absolutely. Can you hear me?

>> Yes. Thank you.

>> RACHEL: Great. I'm so happy to be on. Thanks for making time for Maryland, and I unfortunately don't have access to the Adobe website you all are using now so I won't be able to see any questions as they come in so please let me know if I am

missing things or folks would like further information as I'm talking through Maryland's process. I should also mention I believe Steven Hicks, assistant superintendent for early childhood education is also on the line to feel free to jump in as I move through a brief overview of Maryland's needs assessment process. So Maryland's comprehensive statewide needs assessment has four primary components and then I will talk a little bit at the end about other tie ins through other facets of our PDG birth through five work.

And I should mention that at this point in the year, we are coming to the close of our most active data collection period for the needs assessment. So this is a very timely conversation for us to engage in and offers us an additional chance to reflect on our own process. So the we engaged with a number of partners as we approach this work, so the Midatlantic Equity Consortium and the Policy Equity Group supported us in the implementation of several of the components that I will talk about as well as Ready At Five, which is a Maryland-based advocacy organization.

So our four primary components of the process were the document review or I should say are, since everything is ongoing currently. We haven't submitted anything. A document T document review, I series of town hall meetings, a series of focus groups and a survey. So I will just walk through each of those and just provide some broad strokes as to what we have been doing in Maryland. So the document review as has been alluded to throughout the conversation.

We really tried to take a broad approach and look across all of the various kinds of needs assessments that are conducted through other programs within the state including, I think I heard McVee mentioned so home visiting, of course, head start, early intervention. Programs such as our Judy Center program, and in addition to the needs assessment, I should say we also, you know, look at current data that we are able to, you know, parse and analyze on a regional and jurisdiction and school and classroom level to help inform where we know gaps are occurring in the state.

So, of course, we have our kindergarten readiness assessment data as well as another sort of just element we are able to consult, and also the, you know, previous strategic plans I think Kentucky referred to sort of the continuation of their Race To The Top. Certainly Maryland has done a great deal of strategic and statewide planning in the past, so we want to make sure we are capturing those kinds of input news the strategic or the needs assessment process which will ultimately inform the next generation of our strategic plan under this work. I believe we limited the document review to about the a five-year kind of radius, if you will, and I think that was fairly informal, but we wanted to make sure we were capturing up to date information.

So that document will review will be folded into or the findings and reflections will be folded into our overall needs assessment report. So our town hall process has been going on for the past several months and I will talk about that since that was a core component of the process. We conducted 18 town halls across Maryland's 24 jurisdictions.

Some of these were grouped together based on geographic proximity but we wanted to make sure that we were really able to capture the regional and local distinctions that we knew would come out through the dialogue and those meetings. So we grouped some jurisdictions together just for logistics and convenience, but wanted to make sure that we didn't go too crazy in putting together to many disparate kinds of communities.

So we held two town halls per day for each of the 24 jurisdictions, some of which were grouped together which turned into a total of 18, so one in the morning and one at night. These were independently facilitated through the help of some of the partners that I mentioned earlier, although we did have MSDE staff at each of those meetings, although certainly they were not there to actively participate unless there was a really clear point of clarification that needed to be made to help move the conversation along. All of the meetings were recorded for transcription purposes, but we assured the participants that their anonymity would be part of the integrity to no one would be quoted by name in any of our reporting.

I think one of the really, not to sound overly positive about Maryland's process, but I think one of the strong components of the work as we put together the town halls was our sort of screening of the event in each jurisdiction where it was held. So we started off each town hall with a joint presentation by folk from MSCE, usually Steven himself, the Department of Human Services and the Department of Health.

I think that helps to set the context and the stage if you will for the participants in the meetings to really understand that the PDG birth through five work under way in the state really was, is seeking to forth that systematic integration and, you know, programmatic coordination. So it was a great way of starting off each meeting. In addition, we used KRA data to help frame the conversation so that jurisdictions could find themselves in the story of that data through data displays and then look at where their jurisdiction stacked up in the state as well as comparatively the statewide data.

So those were two methods that I think helped really make the experience more meaningful for participants as they headed into the conversation. We had really strong representation across the full early care and learning community I would say, we had providers both center-based and home-based, practitioners, staff, teachers, administrators and teachers across local districts, local leaders, parents, community partners, folks that were represented on our own local ETAC. So a really great cross-section of the early care and learning community I would say across the region.

And we did do a pretty intensive registration and tracking process so that we were able to really capture the participants even though, of course, we won't be using their full identities as we report the data, but it was important for us to be able to track who was attending so that they might even be part of a follow-up process in terms of our strategic plan methodology.

So and, you know, I think all of the areas of the domains, the eleven domains that have been highlighted by federal guidance for the needs assessment and thinking about what the strategic plan will ultimately focus on, I think all of those areas were represented in the conversations that occurred. And we had a strong, you know, protocol in place with set questions that I think the other beauty of the town hall process was to see the organic conversations really evolve.

So access, affordability, quality, how the system functions overall in terms of coordination, and whether programs felt easy to access or duplicative or were lacking in terms of the way services felt provided to particular members of the community as well as all of the other areas that have been touched on, professional development, the Maryland Excel, which is our quality rating and improvement system, and certainly, you know, really understanding where needs felt unmet in the state but also hearing from our stakeholders what some proposal might look like.

So very valuable conversations for the town hall process. Is so moving to the focus group process, which is just wrapping up as well, in addition to the town halls we held 22 more focus groups and in this process we engaged our state ETAC early on in the process to help us think about the questions that we wants to pose in the focus group this they were able provide input into development of those questions just during one of those regular meetings so it wasn't additional time being asked of those stakeholders.

So, again, these are independently facilitated and in this context we did not have MSDE staff attend because we wanted to make sure that participants felt comfortable in expressing their views or raising their concerns. So MSDE vetted all of the questions that, of course, the ETAC helped to provide input as they were developed and the integrity, you know, of a focus group research model was really upheld through our protocol.

We did provide our parent participants and I will go through the various participants in each group. We did provide parent participants with incentive in the form of books that were selected at various age and reading levels and also across a bilingual just English and Spanish unfortunately scale.

So our focus groups were grouped around community partners, providers, both family, childcare providers and center-based providers. We did have operate breakout groups for Spanish speaking providers as well as Spanish speaking parents and then one for English speaking parents. So those focus groups are wrapping up as well.

Finally our online survey, I was going to pipe up during the early conversation, but I thought that would be just a little overuse of Maryland's time, so I will speak to some of the points that were raised and commented on by some of the other grantees as well. Our survey is online. It isn't specifically focused on professional development per se although we do have a version of the survey that was targeted towards our provider and administrator community.

It was distributed through the town hall process itself, which was another great use of our time. We provided the survey while participants were there at the town hall with the survey link. So we used that as a distribution mechanism, but also used many of the list serves that MSDE maintains for various aspects of the provider community to make sure that the survey was distributed as widely as possible. It was translated into Spanish and English. I'm trying to speak fast so we have time for questions. We had a great return on the survey, so we are currently in the process of analyzing those data again, it covered a wide range of issues and there was an open text box where people could also just respond to any issue or concern that they wanted to be heard on.

So that analysis will be another important component of the needs assessment reporting. So our next steps are, of course, to synthesize all of this data and information we collected and fold all of these various prongs of the process into a wonderful report of our comprehensive statewide needs assessment process and findings and recommendations that, of course, we will be submitting back to folks at ACF. I should mention briefly that we have the components of the PDG work that would speak to the needs assessment data gathering process. We have provided an opportunity for our legal ETAC to every jurisdiction in Maryland has its own local version of the early, the ETAC infrastructure, and they are trying to apply for grants through PDG, and in so doing provide a local needs assessment back to us as part of the application process. So we are looking forward to folding that in. We have a higher education inventory in partnership with the study of childcare employment going on in the state as part of the PDG work so we hope that we can continue to fold that information into our needs assessment process.

And then through our early years project, which is an approach that supports dual language learners in the state, we have a parent research pilot under way which will also gather information about where parents feel, how well their needs are being met particularly in the area of dual language learning. So, again, it's an iterative process with every part of this grant is and should be, and so we are looking forward to thinking about other ways to continue to inform our understanding of the needs and gaps in proposed solutions in the state.

I will stop there. I'm sorry if I took too long.

>> CHRIS: We are running out of time, but how many people attended your town halls and how did you advertise them?

>> RACHEL: We had just short of 700 people total around the state, 686 to be exact. So it was a nice sample size. We advertised the town halls through just a variety of list serves and public communications mechanisms, so we had the link on our website as communications were sent out regarding other aspects of the grant, a reminder to take part in the town halls was included and then our list serves, again, were targeted with just direct communications about the town halls.

>> CHRIS: Thanks that's very helpful. I just wanted to point out one of the things Brittany pointed out in the chat box is the, in terms of the work force development survey they did in New Hampshire, they were lucky enough that a county in their state conducted a work force survey and they were able to use questions from that. I came across this in another topic I was researching where there was interesting work going on at the county level and, you know, if you haven't reached out to some of your counties or local communities to see if they may have something relevant to your needs assessment, it may be worth doing because you may find something, I know sometimes depending how the state is structures you may or may not hear about these things and sometimes they can be useful.

Then just a general point about the sharing, if you have a survey or a focus group protocol, especially if you feel like it worked really well, or on the other hand, if there is something that happened in your needs assessment process that you felt like I wish we had known this ahead of time because we would have avoided that pitfall, please do share that with your TA special list, and especially if you are willing to share it with other states. I think it's really helpful to have an opportunity for everybody to kind of benefit from everybody else's experience and people are at different places in this process, and I think to the extent that we can share materials that can help one state based on your experience, it would be very much appreciated by the other states by TA specialists so anything you have that you feel like you are willing to share, able to share or if you have things on line, let us know and we will make sure we can get it out to as many as possible.

I realize we are almost done. I'm not going to go into detail in the needs assessment submission instructions. I think it's been something that's, you know, going to be part of other discussions and it was in the materials that Richard sent out. I would say, you know, part of it is just kind of, one of the things that would be very helpful in terms of reviewing these given the numbers and the depth of them is something that clearly indicates where different requirements and domains are covered in your needs assessment when you submit it. So the people who are reviewing it are able to find those things and able to assess them based on your understanding of where they are rather than kind of looking and trying to figure that out.

If you say this is where we answered that question, it will be helpful both for you and for them. And then I think, I think we are in the point where we have to do the upcoming activities and closing, and I don't remember whether Sami or Jim you are going to do this.

>>

>> JIM: That's me, so thanks Chris. Thank you, everybody. First of all, before I get to the bullet, there were a couple of questions that we didn't get to today. We are crafting a question and answer report that contains all of the questions that we received and either answered between the first call and this call or some questions that we didn't get to that we will answer, and then we will make that report available to all of you so you will have a Q and A concerning the needs assessment.

Up and coming activities just to bring to your attention, there will be a conversation on the strategic plan guidance and document that was released. The conversation will happen next Monday, June 17th, 3:00 eastern, and then back yourself up depending where you are in the time zone process.

There will also be the National Consumer Education Resource webinar around supporting consumer education resources. That will be on June 13th. You should have gotten a notice and an invitation to that. Then there will be a follow-up. They call it, Ask Me Anything, on June 27 so two weeks following up on the same topic.

We continue to have our communication with your Federal Project Officers and you should too. And please continue to reach out to your TA special list. For those of you that are online within your states if you want to share your draft of your needs assessment, please do so with your specialist and we will be happy to get information back to you before you do official submission. We have created a peer-to-peer learning opportunity, so some states have asked us specific questions and we will be linking them up with a peer or peers that we understand have the some answers and can give us some guidance.

So we are doing that. And you will be getting follow-up email about this conversation, the recording and there is a survey on that follow-up email. We are very interested in getting some feedback to you about how you think these conversations are going, and what we are calling them. Thank you all so much. We appreciate your calling in. We had quite a number of people call in again today. Thank you to Rachel and John for your willingness and Leslie for your willingness to come on, and Sarah, and we will sign off. And, again, if you have any follow-up questions, please get in touch with one of your PDG B-5 TA team members and have a great rest of the week. We appreciate you signing off the or signing on, but I'm signing off. Thanks Chris, and also thank you Sami and Tanisha behind the scenes for machining this work.

>> Thanks everybody, have a great Dale.

>> Bye.

(Concluded at 4:00 ET).

***

***