



## PROFILES: SUCCESSFUL PUBLIC-PRIVATE PARTNERSHIPS

<b>State:</b>	Iowa
<b>Partnership name:</b>	Early Childhood Iowa
<b>Web site(s):</b>	<a href="http://www.state.ia.us/earlychildhood/">http://www.state.ia.us/earlychildhood/</a>
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### 1. Background

The Iowa Community Empowerment Board, founded in 1998, was composed of state agency heads and gubernatorial appointees, and supported 58 local Empowerment Boards representing 99 counties in developing and implementing strategic plans focused on the healthy development of children from birth to age 5.

In 2001, Iowa leaders founded Early Childhood Iowa (ECI) Stakeholders, an alliance of stakeholders focused on building a coordinated state early childhood system. ECI Stakeholders was designated as Iowa's early childhood advisory council in 2009. In 2010, the Iowa General Assembly passed the Early Childhood Iowa Initiative, merging the Iowa Community Empowerment Board and ECI Stakeholders into one coordinated, state and local system-building effort identified as Early Childhood Iowa. This entity now serves as the State's early childhood advisory council.

ECI is a collaborative, comprehensive partnership that promotes and invests in a comprehensive system of early care, education, health, and human services in Iowa that improves outcomes for children. ECI was founded on the premise that communities and state government can work together to improve the well-being of the State's youngest children by increasing the efficiency and effectiveness of early care, education, health, and human services provided to families with children from zero through age 5. ECI's efforts unite agencies, organizations, and community partners to speak with a shared voice to support, strengthen, and meet the needs of all young children and families.

## 2. Mission and Goals

The vision for Early Childhood Iowa is, “Every child, beginning at birth, will be healthy and successful.” Since its inception in 1998 as the Community Empowerment Board, ECI has been guided by legislation that established five required goals, to be tracked and measured at both statewide and local levels. ECI (then Community Empowerment) utilized the *Accountable Government Act* as the standard for measuring progress toward accountability. The Iowa state legislature has designated the following result areas:

- Healthy Children;
- Children Ready to Succeed in School;
- Safe and Supportive Communities;
- Secure and Nurturing Families; and
- Secure and Nurturing Early Learning Environments.

Goals for each result area are delineated in ECI’s strategic plan, which is available at [http://www.state.ia.us/earlychildhood/files/how\\_to\\_get\\_involved/StrategicPlanRevised2009.pdf](http://www.state.ia.us/earlychildhood/files/how_to_get_involved/StrategicPlanRevised2009.pdf).

## 3. Governance and Partnership Members

ECI is comprised of an ECI State Board and 39 ECI Area boards.

### State Board Structure



ECI is administered by the ECI State Board. The ECI State Board promotes the state vision for a comprehensive early care, education, health, and human services system. The Board consists of 21 voting members, 15 citizen members, and department directors from the following six state agencies: Economic Development Authority, Education, Human Rights, Human Services, Public Health, and Workforce Development. The ECI State Board includes four legislators as nonvoting members. Citizen members are appointed by the Governor and confirmed by the Iowa Senate.

The role of the ECI State Board includes providing oversight of state and local efforts. Responsibilities include strategic planning; funding identification; guidance; tracking and reporting the data on the ECI Results and Indicators; advocacy; and public awareness of the importance of early childhood. The ECI State Board is responsible for system development and the funding streams for which it has authority.

The ECI State Board oversees 39 Early Childhood Iowa Area (ECIA) Boards that represent 99 counties. ECIA boards enable local citizens to lead collaborative efforts in the areas of education, health, and human services on behalf of children, families, and other citizens residing in the area. The focus is to improve results for families with young children. The ECIA Boards support activities that promote collaboration and develop early care, health, and education systems in the community for young children and their families.

### Local Board Structure

There are currently 39 ECI Areas that cover the entire State; each area with its own leadership and locally developed community plan. The purpose of an ECI Area is to enable local citizens to lead collaborative

efforts in strategic planning, oversight, and managing of programs and the funding made available to the ECI Area for such programs by federal, state, local, and private sources.

Each Area Board is comprised of volunteers that meet a citizen representative definition or are an elected official. ECIA Boards are required to have representation in the perspectives of business, consumer, education, faith, health, and human services. These requirements ensure that ECIA Boards are citizen-led and that the general interest of children and families is primary in all decisionmaking.

In order to remain a designated ECI Area and continue to receive funds, an ECIA Board must demonstrate to the ECI State Board that it has the capacity to efficiently and effectively administer the responsibilities and authority of its geographic area. This is evaluated via a Levels of Excellence (LOE) Rating System process. The LOE system rates each Board's performance through principals of local accountability, ongoing collaboration, and continuous improvement and self-evaluation.

## 4. Funding and Other Resources

ECI (and its predecessor, Community Empowerment) has been funded by the State since its inception. These resources allow local ECI boards to expand home visitation and parent education; create quality improvement activities for child care and preschool providers, including professional development and training; increase the availability of infant, shift care, and inclusive child care; and increase access to child care and preschools for children living in low-income families.

ECI is funded via two major state programs: Early Childhood Grants and School Ready Grants.

- **Early Childhood Grants:** The Iowa State Legislature appropriates state General Funds for community Early Childhood Grants to enhance quality and capacity of child care. Early Childhood Grants are awarded to all Community Empowerment Areas via a formula. In FY 14, this grant program received \$6.23 million in state General Funds.
- **School Ready Grants:** The Iowa State Legislature appropriates General Funds for School Ready community grants to support comprehensive services for children ages birth – 5. Grants are distributed via formula. In FY 14, this grant program received approximately \$22 million in State General Funds.

ECI funds are legislated to support existing local programs and services by filling gaps—most often by allowing additional families and children to be served, or by increasing the quality of the services provided. As the coordinating body within its ECI area, it is the ECIA Board's responsibility to convene community members and collectively determine the strengths, gaps, and needs of the families and young children in its community. The responsibility to allocate funds based on identified gaps and needs within the local community plans lies solely with each ECIA Board.

## 5. Activities

The following are partner projects of ECI:

- Iowa's Barriers to Prenatal Care Project
- Iowa's Early Learning Standards
- Iowa Head Start Association



- Project Launch - Iowa
- 1st Five - Healthy Mental Development
- Statewide Voluntary Preschool Program
- Iowa Quality Rating System
- Prevent Child Abuse Iowa
- I-Smile™
- Early ACCESS Iowa (IDEA Part C)
- Family Support
- Fit for Life
- T.E.A.C.H. Early Childhood Iowa
- Iowa Association for the Education of Young Children
- It's About Our Kids
- Shared Visions Parent Program
- Shared Visions Preschool Program
- Every Child Counts
- Iowa's Child Welfare Decatorization Program



ECI is also currently working to develop a statewide early childhood data system, the business requirements of which were finalized in 2013.

Additionally, as part of the infrastructure for Early Childhood Iowa, legislation directs the six state agencies represented on the state board to designate staff to work as a technical assistance (TA) team, along with the Early Childhood Iowa Office in the Department of Management. The role of the TA team is to provide coordination and other support to the State's comprehensive early care, education, health, and human services system.

## 6. Evaluation and Outcomes

The ECI State Board collects and reports statewide indicator data to quantify and track progress toward the statewide results. Further, in FY 2011, the ECI State Board also adopted consistent program measures that are required to be reported by all programs funded with both Early Childhood and School Ready Grant dollars.

All ECI Areas are required to collect performance data from the programs and services they fund during the fiscal year. This information is submitted in the local ECIA annual reports to the ECI Office. The data is then compiled and shared from a state perspective in the ECI state annual report. In order to increase the consistency of the data reported, all areas must report the same program measures for the services funded.

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