

Race to the Top: Early Learning Challenge for Minnesota
Friday, September 9, 2011

Q&A Session

Q: Will any legislation be required in order to do this?

A: We have not identified any legislative needs at this time.

Q: Are kids with high needs and disabilities included in this plan?

A: Yes.

Q: Is the prenatal segment included in this grant?

A: Yes, in that this population is not specifically left out. We will be doing our best to include the prenatal segment in this system plan for the grant.

Q: What is meant by the term “regulated programs”?

A: The grant is open to all types of programs that serve kids ages 0-5. “Regulated” would appear to exclude FFN.

Q: Is this intended to be a systems plan?

A: Yes, there will be a coordinated data system and much more. We strongly believe that the plan must be done in conjunction with others. We are trying to figure out how many new resources will be necessary for systems implementation. It is important that we look at incentives for access. It is all about moving kids toward school readiness.

Q: Is parent engagement an element to this grant?

A: Yes, we plan to address parent engagement in the grant. Home visiting will be a very important piece of this. All parent engagement methods will be looked at and considered in the proposal design.

Q: Will the quality rating continue to be voluntary?

A: Yes, it is voluntary.

Q: Will we move forward with these goals even if we do not get the grant?

A: Yes, we intend to create an early learning plan for MN through this process—whether or not there is funding. Our goal is for this to be the early learning plan for Governor Dayton’s administration.

Q: How many states are applying?

A: 36 states have indicated intent to apply. We expect 4-6 states to be chosen to receive grants. They will be looking for bold initiatives in communities where there is evidence of high-quality existing work. This is not intended to be a start-up grant. Rather they are trying to lift up and strengthen existing efforts.

Q: How will different cultures and ethnicities be involved?

A: This is very important and we are looking to neighborhoods and community leaders to guide us in this. Many of the elements to be included have already done foundational work in this area and needs to continue.

Q: How many agency level staff positions will the grant fund?

A: There has not been discussion around creating staff positions with these grant dollars. The plan is intended to support an early learning system and as such may include some positions, but no budgeting has been done yet.

Q: Will this become a springboard for unfunded mandates?

A: The grant is very specific about demonstrating sustainability. Every effort is being made to ensure that the grant efforts are sustained and that early learning work will improve in quality, efficiency, and impact.

Q: When will the grant awards be released?

A: We will know whether or not we received the grant sometime between October and December. It is most likely going to be announced in mid December.

Q: Will the grant include anything related to health and mental health?

A: Both will be included as the opportunity presents itself in the plan (if we can, we will).

Q: Is access being addressed?

A: Yes, access is a huge issue that we will need to address in the grant. We welcome your ideas for innovative ways to address early learning access in MN.

Q: How can higher education be helpful in this process?

A: The whole notion of workforce is really important to talk about. Higher education can provide evaluation support, volunteer support, and general human capacity around research.

Q: If everyone can see the suggestions on the United Front website then how do we remain competitive? Won't everyone know what we are doing?

A: Please use this email address to submit your "top secret" ideas:
mnrttideas@unitedfrontmn.org.

Q: How will the Early Learning Council (ELC) interact with this?

A: The ELC will review the previous Council's draft comprehensive framework and the abstract of the application and make a recommendation to the Children's Cabinet.

Additional Comments:

We know what the issues are. We know there are great examples of ways that these issues have been addressed. We need your help in alignment and coordination of a systems effort.

It is important to pay attention to the needs of Native populations in urban areas not just in reservation areas.

We have to ensure that early learning data is aligning with read-by-third data. These efforts have to be woven together.

Do not forget about your county commissioners. We are here to help and have access to a lot of people, data, and resources.

This effort is a beacon for how to catalyze change. It is a model for rallying many players and stakeholders around a common goal.

We intend to have an abstract of the plan that folks can look at and react to.

We are putting together a database of everyone we can think of. Contact us if you want to add someone to that list. Help us think of the unusual partners that we might not think of otherwise.

It is very important that we ensure alignment with the bigger educational system (in professional development, assessment, curriculum, Title I, etc.).

Given that this work is currently being done with United Way, McKnight, etc. it is critical that we consider those efforts and find ways to weave practices together throughout the process.

Consider talking about how MN has been a leader in the area of evaluation and assessment.

Saint Paul Public Schools and the McKnight Foundation have done some good work about the school to home coordination- this may be a good resource to look at.

There are a lot of opportunities to leverage what has already been around home visiting (using literacy training and curriculum to support school readiness). Lots of good partnerships, including Head Start

It is important for us to consider how we can incorporate the voice of fathers, particularly incarcerated fathers. This is an "at-risk" population that often gets left out of the early learning picture.

