

LEARNS Early

Learning Work Group

August 3, 2023

Reminders

Work Group Members

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- Richard T. Atkinson, Ozark Opportunities, Inc. Head Start
- Alexandria Galleur, Penny Lane Child Care Center
- Anna Strong, AR Chapter of American Academy of Pediatrics
- Diana Nathan, Parent
- Leigh Keener, Teacher
- Shelley Ray, Teacher/Junction City SD
- Jamie Ward, Curricula Concepts
- Tracy Dunn, Teacher, Russellville School District
- Jenny Barber, Russellville School District/Pre-K Administrator
- Bill Sims, Grow Learning Center/Early Intervention
- Tara Armstrong, Camden Fairview School District
- Fredricka Tabor, White River Health
- Gwen Couthren, Guy Fenter Education Service Cooperative
- Brandy Wolfenbarger, Pre-K Administrator/ Springdale SD
- Joe Fisher, Guy-Perkins School District Administrator
- Angela Betancourt, Greenbrier School District/Pre-K Administrator

Scope and Sequence

To accomplish the timeline outlined in LEARNS, this group will meet biweekly for the next several months to discuss the following topics. Adjustments may be made or additional topics added at a later date based on the pace and timing of work group meetings.

Date	Anticipated Topics
July 6	Kick-Off
July 20	Transition plan
August 3	Local early childhood leads
August 17	Definition of K readiness

Reflections on Executive Order Report

Reflection

You were asked to review the [LEARNS Executive Order Report: An Analysis of Arkansas's Early Childhood System](#).

- What resonated with you in this report? What did you agree with?
- What questions do you have after reading this report?



Local Leads

Why Local Leads?

LEARNS Requirements

The **LEARNS** Act stipulates that the state appoint and partner with **local early childhood lead organizations**. These local lead organizations will be charged to:

- **Support access** to early childhood programs
- **Identify gaps** in services
- **Foster local partnerships**
- **Create alignment** among public and private providers and agencies within the community
- Establish a **comprehensive, locally supported plan** for providing early childhood programs and services



Challenges

The Executive Order Report named three current challenges in the early childhood system:

- Coordination at the state level is complex, and there is no consistent plan for local coordination.
- No one knows a true unduplicated count of children being served and where gaps exist.
- The current accountability system may not align with child outcomes.

These challenges lead to a system that is **difficult for families to navigate**. Families may be unaware of all of the early care and education options in their community or be unsure what to look for in terms of quality care. Others may have to jump through hoops and apply to multiple options, each with different eligibility requirements, before finding a spot for their child.

Benefits of a Local Lead Model



Serve as the formal **state-local implementation partners** to execute the state's early childhood plan in a manner that **responds to local context**.



Act as a one-stop-shop and provide coordinated information and support for **families to learn about and apply for early childhood programs and services**.



Support **early childhood professionals** to enroll children through public funds, grow their capacity, and improve their quality.



Generate **local support for early childhood and strengthen local partnerships**, with the ultimate goal of expanding access to high-quality early childhood programs at the local level.

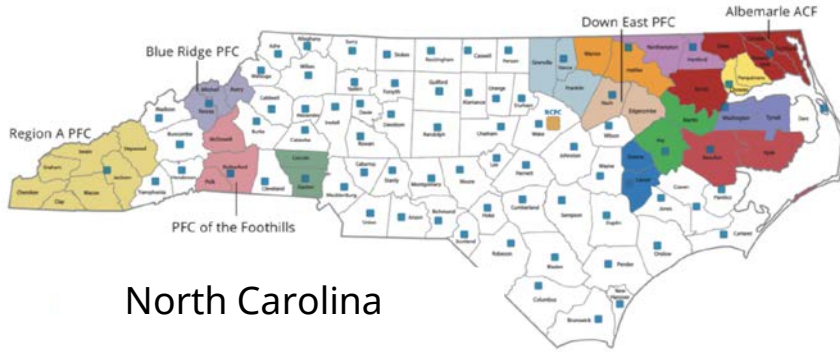
What do Local
Leads do?

Defining Roles

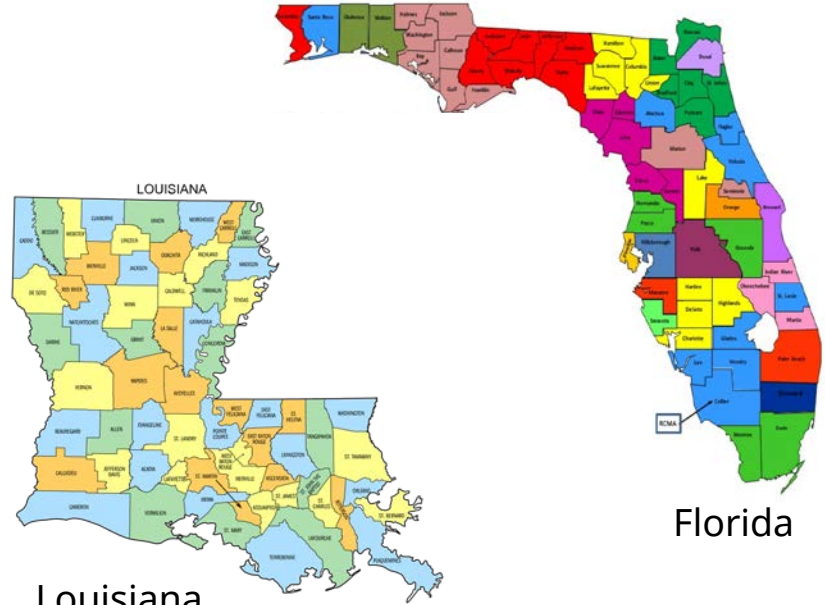
For Arkansas to achieve its vision for early childhood, it will be important to clearly define the state role, the local role, the role of experts/vendors, and the role of stakeholders and advocates.

Player	Most Important Functions
State Team	Define statewide vision and strategy, lead implementation of that strategy, provide coaching and support to the field, and hold the field accountable for expected outcomes
Local implementation partners	Develop and implement a local plan, aligned to state priorities
Contractors/Vendor	Offer specific expertise, additional capacity, off-the-shelf products, or customized services to fast-track successes
Stakeholders (e.g, families, providers, and advocates)	Share their experiences, feedback, and input to inform policy and new initiatives, and advocate to the governor, legislators, board members, and the public to generate statewide support

Local Leads in Other States



North Carolina



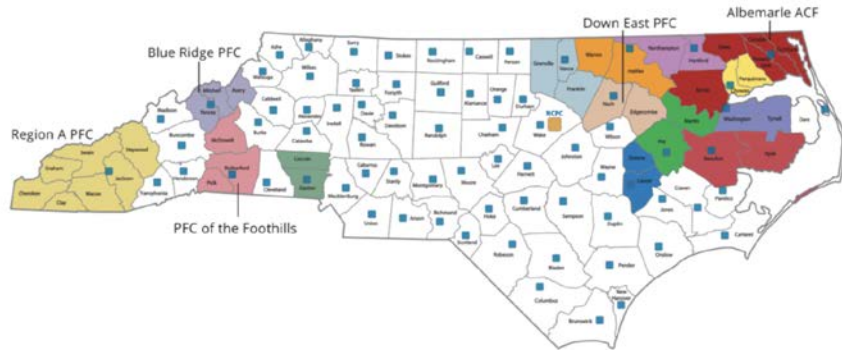
Louisiana

Florida

Local Leads in Other States

North Carolina

North Carolina's [Smart Start network](#) consists of 75 partnerships led by The North Carolina Partnership for Children (NCPC).



In North Carolina, Smart Start networks are responsible for:

- Developing local priorities in alignment with state guidance to address the most pressing issues of the community
- Supporting child care to be high quality
- Supporting families with tools and resources
- Working with partner organizations to improve coordination of services for children and families

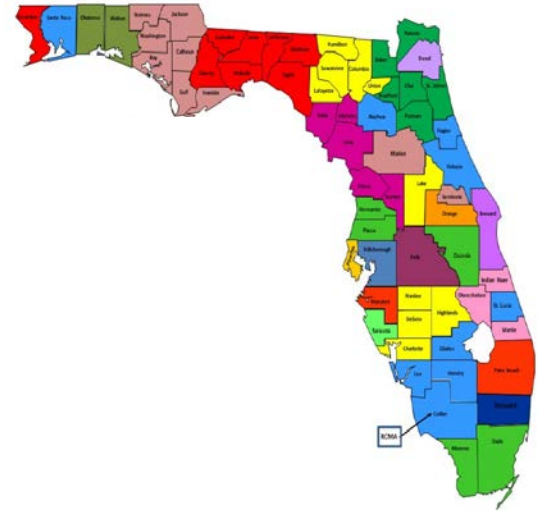
Local Leads in Other States

Florida

The Office of Early Learning (OEL), within the FLDOE, partners with 30 local early learning coalitions to deliver comprehensive early childhood care and education services statewide.

In Florida, local early learning coalitions are responsible for:

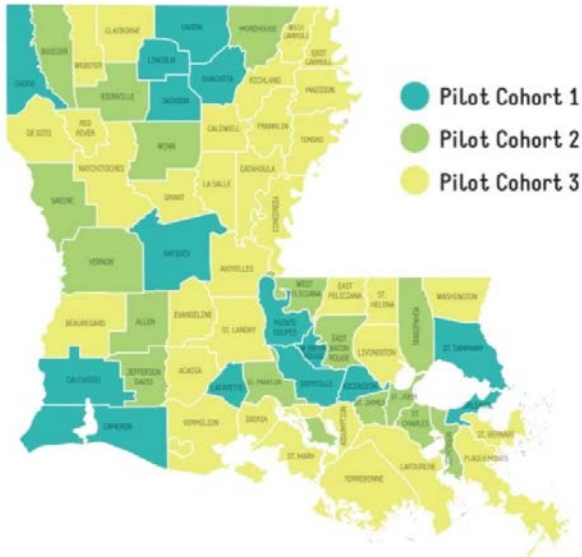
- Helping families understand their options and enroll their children in early care and education
- Promoting and supporting high-quality early learning through curriculum and CLASS training



Local Leads in Other States

Louisiana

Since the passing of Act 3 (2012), the Louisiana Department of Education has unified its early childhood system into 65 community networks.



In Louisiana, community networks are responsible for:

- Measuring and supporting the quality of all publicly-funded early childhood classrooms
- Coordinating enrollment so that families can more easily navigate the early care and education system
- Creating a local strategic plan, aligned with the state's vision, addressing challenges within their context

Local Leads in Arkansas

The LEARNS Act requires that every corner of the state has a local early childhood lead organization by October 2024. In order to make that happen, the following steps must be taken:

Approximate Date	Action
August 2023	The state defines local lead expectations and parameters for the pilot program
Fall 2023	Launch initial pilot of local lead organizations (Cohort 1)
Spring 2024	Onboard Cohort 2 of local lead organizations for the pilot
Summer 2024	Using learnings from the pilot year, make adjustments to local lead expectation and parameters
Fall 2024	Launch full implementation of local leads in every community in Arkansas

Discussion

- In the Arkansas context, what would be most helpful for Arkansas local leads to be empowered to support?
- What do you think is important to incorporate in the application process to select local leads?
- What remaining questions do you have about local leads?

You can capture your notes at tinyurl.com/LEARNS23.



Next Steps

- Tonya Williams will send draft materials in advance of next meeting
- Work group members review [current definition of kindergarten readiness](#)
- Next meeting's topic: Definition of kindergarten readiness