



**EEC Board Committee
Planning and Evaluation**

Thursday March 22, 2012
10:00am-1:00pm

Department of Early Education and Care
51 Sleeper St. 4th Floor
Boston, MA 02210

AGENDA

Members of the Committee Present

Sherrill Killins, EEC Commissioner (Ex-Officio)
Carol Craig O'Brien, Committee Chairperson
Eleonora Villegas-Reimers, Board Member
Cheryl Stanley, Board Member (by phone)

EEC Staff Present

Jennifer Louis, Management Analyst
Jay Swanson, Policy Analyst

Guests

Marianna Litovich, UMass Donahue Institute
Kimberley Sprague, UMass Donahue Institute

Members of the Public

The meeting was called to order at 10:00am.

Welcome and Introductions

Committee members were welcomed to the meeting and introduced themselves to the members of the public.

Routine Business:

Minutes

Members tabled the review of the January 26, 2012 minutes until the April meeting.

Disclosures

Committee Chair Carol Craig O'Brien disclosed that she works for the Westwood Public Schools as an Early Childhood Coordinator and is a recipient of a CFCE grant and 262 grants and interested in future funding.

Board Member Eleonora Villegas-Reimers disclosed that she works for Wheelock College who is a recipient of EEC grant funds.

Cheryl Stanley disclosed that she is Dean of Education at Westfield State College which is a partner of the Readiness Center.

Commissioner/Committee Updates

- **UMass Boston Conference Poster**

Commissioner Killins informed the Committee that the team from UMass Boston presented a poster at a conference. The Committee received a copy of the poster.

- **Evaluation Project Update**

The Committee was provided with an updated version of the Evaluation Projects that the Department has done or is currently in process.

- **Early Education/Higher Education Advisory**

Commissioner Killins asked that the Committee review the document and provide her or EEC Management Analyst Jennifer Louis feedback particularly regarding the bullets. In addition, the finalized document will be discussed at the April meeting with Higher Education Board Chair Charles Desmond and Higher Education Commissioner Freeland.

- **QRIS Process**

Commissioner Killins updated the Committee on some of the changes in the QRIS information process. She explained that there will be a new broad based orientation to QRIS to be delivered by CCR&R, EPS and EEC Regional Offices. This orientation will be approximately 90 minutes. Next step would be the QRIS Foundational Training which would include a 12 hour online course and additional modules developed by CASE. After these two courses, programs would then start the self-assessment process. From here programs would be eligible to receive QRIS supports which would include support for access to a health care consultant, degree attainment, professional development, QRIS grants, business planning and other additional supports that are yet to be determined but might include succession planning.

Discussion

Home Visiting Grant Evaluation

(Materials-MAHVI Evaluation: Community System Assessment and Evaluation)

Commissioner Killins provided the Committee with a background of how we got to the Home Visiting Grant Evaluation. She explained that there have not been funds in the core budget for research and evaluation. In previous years, funds were taken for the UPK line item. Commissioner Killins is interested in working with the public colleges on research and evaluation projects. She was able to negotiate with DPH to include a community based evaluation in the home visiting grant. The main research question for the evaluation is, are communities in a position to support children development?

Commissioner Killins has contracted with UMass Donahue Institute to conduct this evaluation. Commissioner Killins explained to the Committee that Tufts is evaluating the model and that Harvard Catalyst is more interested in how state agencies organize themselves to support the initiative. As the evaluators being finding out information it is important that all 3 share the information among themselves.

Marianna Litovich from UMass Donahue Institute provided the Committee with a brief overview. The team at UMass Donahue Institute sees themselves as part of a 3 part team with includes Tufts and Harvard Catalyst as well as themselves. Marianna Litovich has spoken with Jessica Goldberg from Tufts to learn more information about the community piece that is included in their evaluation. She noted that the work the Donahue Institute is doing with compliment the work Tufts is doing.

The goal of this evaluation is to understand the community context that the home visiting initiative existing in. The initiative is only as good as the community capacity and support.

UMass Donahue Institute's evaluation is broken out into 3 phases. Phase 1 is to determine a definition of what community health and readiness looks like. The researchers will create a model of the components that feed into the community context and capacity.

The committee provided Marianna Litovich with some suggestions particularly in the wording in the proposal. For example, instead of community readiness, it should be called community context and capacity and instead of child welfare should be child development. Commissioner Killins asked whether multiple sources of data will be used to come up with the definition. Marianna Litovich noted that they will be looking at multiple sources of data including the 104 CFCE grantees as well as head start standards and strengthen families information as well as other sources.

Phase 2 focuses on the high need communities. The goal of this phase is to understand how communities map or compare to the community context and capacity definition developed in phase 1 and how they can move toward providing the support for child development. There will be an in depth analysis of approximately 7 communities. This number may be higher depending on the amount of data collection needed. Commissioner Killins suggested that the data collection occur in ways that is natural for example; having the CFCE grantees collect data. She also expressed interest in having a convenience sample so more information can be collected outside of those 7 communities. She expressed that it needs to support the community in what they do on the ground. Committee Chair Carol Craig O'Brien thought it could help communities see where there are gaps in their communities.

Board Member Eleonora Villegas-Reimers asked whether they are connecting to Thrive in 5 in Boston. Commissioner Killins also suggested that they look at Berkshire Priorities, Springfield Reading by 4 and the group in Worcester as well. Marianna Litovich noted they haven't look at these but will.

It was noted that the CFCE grantees should be doing most of the type of work UMass Donahue Institute is contracted for but UMass Donahue Institute will be working to organize it. For example in some communities there is no bridge between the CFCE, Home Visiting and Children's Trust Fund. Commissioner Killins noted the question is how to have the CFCE get the authority in the community to do their job. Committee Chair Carol Craig O'Brien noted this was an issue of empowerment.

Marianna Litovich presented to the Committee the third phase which is still in development. There is a possibility of 4 topics that could be looked at under the System Evaluation phase. These include the following:

1. Highlight promising, innovative, distinctive and sustainable practices;
2. Explore issues of sustainability;
3. Understand issues of impact: Why are communities' levels of readiness important? What impact are they making for children and families? and,
4. Understand System change.

The Committee discusses the topic of understanding impact. Though this will be more difficult to do since there is no intervention per se, Marianna Litovich thought there were ways to this but it's not going to be as broad. Commissioner Killins noted we could do a random sample and engage with families to understand how they decide or manage in their communities.

Committee Chair Carol Craig O'Brien asked about looking at accessibility. Marianna Litovich noted that this was in the evaluation and they will be looking at this.

Commissioner Killins and EEC Management Analyst Jennifer Louis will work with Lauren Smith and Ron Benham from DPH to make sure they understand the evaluation and the connection to the Tufts and Harvard Evaluation. Marianna Litovich will provide EEC Management Analyst Jennifer Louis an updated proposal based on the

conversation today by tonight or first thing tomorrow. Commissioner Killins will be discussing this on her call with Lauren Smith and Rom Benham from DPH in the morning.

FY13 Validation Study for QRIS

(Materials- Preliminary QRIS Validation Study Design, Evaluation Logic Model for MA EEC QRIS Validation Study, Appendix A, Highlights document)

Commissioner Killins provided the Committee with the federal context regarding QRIS validation studies. The federal government is requiring that the QRIS gets validation. There are 4 things to look at for validation: 1. making sure indicators are valid and reliable- Massachusetts has already done this, 2. validating the tools (if using state developed tool) - Massachusetts is using valid and reliable tools, 3. Do the indicators in QRIS make a difference? Does quality increase as you go up a level? Is there a difference between level 1 and level 2? Commissioner Killins sees really 2 levels- level 1 and 2 which are self-assessment levels and levels 3 and 4 which are externally assessed levels, and 4. Who does it make a difference for?

Commissioner Killins also noted that there a report due to the federal government that needs to include details on the validation study as well as how funds would be spent.

Kim Sprague from UMass Donahue Institute provide the Committee with drafts of the QRIS evaluation study that they are proposal but wanted to nail down some items today. Kim Sprague from UMass Donahue Institute reviewed the documents provided to the Committee. Based on the conversation of the Committee the focus of the validation study would include do the standards matter across all program types and settings and across the 3 sets of standards. It was noted that programs participating in QRIS are more likely to serve EEC funded children as participation is required by many initiatives. Commissioner Killins confirmed that UMass Donahue would be looking almost entirely at secondary data which EEC currently has and not data that UMass Donahue would need to collect. It was noted that staff in the regional office could do the level validation for programs in their region. Kim Sprague from UMass Donahue Institute noted that in order to use the secondary data she would need to know what's available and make sure the data was valid and reliable. A stratified sample would be drawn out of the programs who are QRIS Level 2 to determine what it takes for programs to move up in QRIS. Kim Sprague would need to determine what type of strata would be used for a sample. The strata could be program size, program type geography and type of community (rural and urban). Commissioner Killins also thought it would be important to know whether the levels are attainable with support. Kim Sprague from UMass Donahue Institute noted that EEC would need to track participation in the support.

Commissioner Killins informed Kim Sprague that she will need quarterly updates on the progress as well as more in depth reports twice a year. She should also expect to report to this Committee. In addition, there will most likely be additional reporting for the federal reporting for the Early Learning Challenge Grant.

The Committee discussed the idea of a study of the tools in QRIS. Commissioner Killins noted that this is a smaller study and not part of this study unless it's absolutely crucial to do. Marianna Litovich suggested that if there were a couple of tools that would work, it could be included when the verification takes place through the regional offices. Commissioner Killins asked if the study can go forward without studying the tools. Kim Sprague agreed that it could and the data that's gathered through this part of the study would inform the future study on the tools.

Commissioner Killins is also hoping to learn from this study if there are still too many standards and if some could be removed.

Committee Chair Carol Craig O'Brien asked Kim Sprague what she needs from EEC and this Committee. Kim Sprague answered that she needs the QRIS database. Commissioner Killins noted that she will have this tomorrow. Having the database will assist her in determining the strata as well as the sample size. Kim Sprague noted that the minimum sample size would probably be 500-600 programs. The sample programs picked after September 1 would be asked to participate in a longitudinal study (3 years) and EEC would go back to them at least once a year. Kim Sprague also suggested that depending on attrition a cohort model could be used. Commissioner Killins asked

EEC Policy Analyst Jay Swanson to speak with EEC Deputy Director of Field Operations Dave McGrath to determine if there is any data on program closures and if EEC tracks them.

Board Member Cheryl Stanley express that it is important that we get the sampling right.

Due to the March 30 deadline to provide the federal government with the details of how funds will be spent, Kim Sprague will provide Commissioner Killins with an updated copy of the budget and timeline by Monday. In addition, this information will be sent to the Planning and Evaluation Committee.

QRIS Participation Study

(Materials- QRIS Participation Report)

The Committee agreed with the Report.

The next meeting of the Planning and Evaluation Committee is April 19 at EEC Boston from 10:00am-1:00pm.

Possible Agenda items:

- Higher Education- invite Charlie Desmond and Richard Freeland

The Committee convened at 12:30pm.