

Lean Design Event for Empowerment
June 15-19, 2009
Summary of Recommendations

Why a Review of Community Empowerment?

When Community Empowerment was created 12 years ago, Iowa was on the forefront of developing a state-community partnership to building early learning systems. The Lean Event allowed for the opportunity to reflect and build on what works in Iowa while developing new models and strategies based on the latest early childhood research.

Current economic conditions pushed recent legislative sessions to more thoroughly and intentionally look at efficiencies and accountability in state government. Community Empowerment often became a focal point in conversations during legislative discussions. These discussions led to questions regarding the efficiencies and effectiveness of Community Empowerment, both at a state and local level. The Iowa Department of Management proposed to members of the legislature to host a Design Lean Event for Community Empowerment. Lean is about continuous improvement. The intent of this event was about taking a good system and making it better.

How was the Lean Event conducted?

On May 18, 2009, a diverse representation of state and local early childhood stakeholders came together to develop a scope and objectives for the week-long Lean event.

Purpose:

“This event will define Empowerment’s role in a world class early care, health and education system at a state and local level, to help young children and their families be successful.”

Objectives:

1. Improve efficiencies at the state level
 - Examine the capacity of the state Technical Assistance (TA) team to support the local boards
 - Examine the current involvement of mandated state agencies and the level of integration within their agencies
 - Determine how to engage other state agencies’ involvement
2. Improve efficiencies at the local level
 - Examine structure of the Community Empowerment Areas
 - Revisit Community Empowerment’s role as a convener and coordinator of early childhood services
 - Ensure each Community Empowerment Area knows the needs of their constituents
3. Find a balance between maximizing flexibility at the local level and meeting state level requirements, including but not limited to, fiscal, quality and legislative.
4. Clarify Community Empowerment’s role, responsibilities and relationships within the larger system, ie; Early Childhood Iowa
5. Establish consistent performance accountability for the services provided in Community Empowerment Areas.
6. Examine governance structure to identify opportunities to support coordination and integration of:
 - Preschool services
 - Family support services
 - Child care services
 - Child health services
7. Examine the branding of “Community Empowerment”

8. Identify hindrances to the system's success
9. Examine structure for state funding and make suggestions to the Legislature if necessary
10. Ensure the Empowerment structure provides local areas with the tools and support needed for good fiscal accountability

The Community Empowerment Lean Team met the week of June 15-19. The Lean Team was facilitated by Jim Scott with Time Based Management (TBM) from Durham, NC. Mr. Scott has facilitated Lean events in Iowa state government for over five years. Staffing support was provided by Mike Rolf at IDOM and Susan Godwin at DHS.

The Lean Team consisted persons from a diverse background of state and local early childhood stakeholders. The members include:

- Ginger Shaw, Local Coordinator
- Kate Bennett, Local CEA Coordinator
- Chris Kivett-Berry, Local CEA Coordinator
- Jody Caswell, DHS – Department of Human Services
- Deb Scrowther, Department Of Management
- Sonni Vierling, Department Of Management
- Gretchen Hageman, Department of Public Health
- Judy Knox, Department of Education
- Tami Foley, Department of Human Services
- Kristi Judkins, Workforce Development
- Chris Carman, Iowa Empowerment Board member (local service provider)
- Michelle Stover-Wright, Child & Family Policy Center
- Sheila Hansen, Child & Family Policy Center
- Robin Madison, Legislative Services Agency
- Gregg Cummings, Iowa Head Start Association
- Shanell Wagler, Department Of Management
- Deborah Helsen, Legislative Services Agency
- Jean Johnson, Department of Economic Development
- Nancy Krause, Lutheran Services of Iowa
- Charlie Bruner, Child & Family Policy Center
- Michael Bergan, Local CEA Coordinator
- Annette Koster, Local CEA Coordinator
- Rep. Cindy Winckler
- Rep. Mary Mascher

Others that provided input during a part of the event were:

- Rep. Dave Heaton
- Rep. Jody Tymeson
- Kate Walton, Iowa Governors Office
- Charles Krogmeier, Department of Human Services
- Tom Newton, Department of Public Health
- Preston Daniels, Department of Human Rights
- Jenifer Parsons, Caucus staff
- Bridget Godes, Caucus staff

The Lean team conducted a Strengths, Weaknesses, Opportunities and Threats (SWOT) analysis. A few of the trends identified include:

- Reduced funding
- Increased attention to accountability
- Changing demographics
- Increased demand for quality
- Increased visibility of an early childhood system throughout the state

The team then developed an early childhood vision for Iowa based on a prioritization process. This process consisted of ranking solutions to the previous identified issues and the high impact priority areas.

What Priorities Were Identified?

1. Levels of Excellence
2. Regionalization
3. Re-define Empowerment Areas
4. State Structure
5. Marketing

What Were the Recommendations?

The following recommendations of the Lean Design Team are based on a statewide perspective to strengthen Iowa's early childhood structure.

Recommendations for Levels of Excellence

A tiered system will be established for local empowerment areas to work towards higher levels of quality. The current system identifies each area as either being in compliance by a designation or a conditional designation. The new system would offer specific criteria for reaching a new level of excellence.

- Emerging – this level would reflect those areas that need additional support
- Capacity building – this level would reflect areas that are meeting the required expectations
- Model – this level reflects an area that is surpassing the required expectations and would allow them to have additional flexibility and possibly offer various incentives

Recommendations for Regionalization

The concept of regionalization is being considered for fiscal, legal and auditing purposes. Different plans for regionalization were considered and it was recommended that existing regional systems in Iowa that provide support to early childhood environments be utilized as appropriate. It was agreed that Community Empowerment Area boards should maintain the local/community planning piece. The group also considered the possibility that creating a new layer of management at the regional level between local areas and the state could lead to increased inconsistency.

Recommendations for Re-defining Empowerment Areas

Recommendations regarding criteria for the establishment of Community Empowerment Areas include the following:

- Single county areas must have a population of no fewer than 5,000 children 0-5
- Four counties is the maximum for any Community Empowerment Area;
- Existing multi-county areas would remain together,
- Multi-county Community Empowerment Areas must have a contiguous border

The goal of the group was to define 30-38 Community Empowerment Areas. In applying these criteria, the group arrived at a model that reduced Community Empowerment Areas from 58 to 35. In this recommendation, 20 areas of the 35 remain unchanged.

Recommendations for the State Structure

The state structure of Community Empowerment (and the greater Early Childhood system) will be reorganized in an effort to increase efficiency. The goal is to create one Early Childhood organization with one unified message that is easily recognized throughout the state. This early childhood system can result in streamlining and aligning existing councils, boards and commissions thus eliminating the need for the continued creation of new councils, commissions, and boards. The primary change will be the blending of Early Childhood Iowa (ECI) and Community Empowerment. The need for a fulltime legislative liaison for Early Childhood was also discussed.

The structure of the state Technical Assistance team will be examined. A few of the overriding concepts that the team wishes to preserve are:

- Representation across the various state departments,
- “Housing” the Early Childhood team in an agency where we can maintain a neutral home. The establishment of area specialists such as Family Support, Preschool settings, Governance, Fiscal, etc.

Recommendations for Marketing

A marketing plan will:

- Increase awareness among targeted audiences about Community Empowerment
- Re-evaluate the name and logo to achieving desired results
- Recruit private and public partners to increase co-investment and increase family friendly work environments
- Build upon and replicate best practice marketing strategies for consistent messaging

What are the Next Steps?

The Lean team has created a “homework” schedule which includes a great deal of information gathering from various stakeholders and leaves room for consideration of alternate or additional ideas in each of the areas of change. As some items may involve 2010 legislative action, an aggressive schedule is being planned.

Input and feedback is crucial for each of the steps taken. For initial feedback, questions have been developed for each of the focus areas. These questions will help sort the initial input received. A variety of feedback methods will be utilized for persons wanting to provide input. This information will be coordinated through the Iowa Community Empowerment Web site. The Lean Design Team will be meeting monthly to move forward with homework and action steps. Input received will be provided to them. Assignments for homework items will be delegated and coordinated. Some items involve work groups that will need to be formed. The current list of homework is being reviewed and sorted by each of the focus groups.