

Application from the State of Connecticut

Office of Governor M. Jodi Rell

National Governors Association Center for Best Practices

Grant Proposal

“Supporting State Early Childhood Advisory Councils”

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Lead Contact: Janice M. Gruendel, Ph.D., M.Ed.
Senior Policy Advisor for Children and Youth
Office of the Governor
State Capitol
Hartford, Connecticut 06106
(cell) 203-824-4766
Janice.Gruendel@aya.yale.edu

Fiscal Agent:
CT Health and Educational Facilities Authority
Richard Gray, President
10 Columbus Blvd
Hartford, CT 06106-1978

Jeffrey Asher, Chief Financial Officer
(office) 860-761-8414
jasher@chefa.com

The Connecticut Health and Educational Facilities Authority
is a quasi-governmental agency.

Application from the State of Connecticut: Early Childhood Investment Initiative
NGA Early Childhood Advisory Councils RFP

Purpose

Connecticut requests to be selected by the National Governors Association as part of multi-state effort to advance the development of early childhood advisory councils in the states. In Connecticut, we have an Early Childhood Education Cabinet established in law and a Governor's Early Childhood Research and Policy Council created by Executive Order. With this grant, we will work to: (1) improve the collaborative decision-making and management process for our Cabinet and (2) advance development of an early care and education "system" in our state. We believe that this joint focus will also improve Connecticut's implementation of the federal "Improving Head Start Act of 2007" as the Cabinet will serve as the designated early childhood advisory council. NGA funds will be utilized to pay for five two-day intensive and facilitated working sessions, described later in this application.

Current Landscape

The Cabinet met for the first time in September 2005, and the Research & Policy Council in February 2006. Together, these bodies are responsible for moving the state toward a coordinated, comprehensive, effective and accountable system of B-9 services. All of the work of both bodies is fully transparent and accessible through public meetings and online records.¹ The Cabinet also serves as the state's first and longest case example of using a Results-Based Accountability (RBA) framework to guide budget decision-making in the legislature and to promote public accountability across both the executive and legislative branches of government.²

Policy Goals. Under the leadership of Governor M. Jodi Rell, Connecticut has embarked on a period of intensive policy work to improve the lives and developmental outcomes of the state's youngest children, with special attention to those vulnerable young children who – with their families – receive services across several state agencies. Through the work of the Early Childhood Education Cabinet, co-chaired by the Governor's Senior Policy Advisor for Children and the Commissioner of the Department of Education, Connecticut has articulated three key policy goals. Beginning with babies born in 2006-07, the state's young children will:

- Reach age-appropriate milestones each year, birth to five,
- Enter kindergarten healthy and ready for school success, and
- Achieve the state's expected academic goal for reading performance in the 4th grade.

Early Childhood Investment Initiative. In response to the *Cabinet's Ready by Five, Fine by Nine Systems Framework* and our *Early Childhood Investment Plan, Part I* (both adopted in 2006), the Governor proposed and the legislature appropriated significant new funds in SFY 08 and 09 to promote the health and readiness of the state's youngest children.

This biennial budget provides for a two-year period of intensive preschool and health care expansion. As a coordinating and collective management entity, the Cabinet is mandated to accomplish quality improvement planning, local capacity building, workforce development and facility expansion planning, and greater public accountability using statewide, cross-agency data. Legislation also now requires that the Cabinet begin a first-ever longitudinal study of early childhood outcomes. In addition to \$27 million targeted for preschool expansion and millions of dollars for early health care expansion, the budget

¹ See the Appendix for membership on both bodies.

² See the current issue of *Governing Magazine*, for specific positive reference to the use of RBA in Connecticut. Online at -- <http://www.governing.com/gpp/2008/ct.htm>

provides the Cabinet with about \$4 million each year for quality, capacity building and accountability initiatives at the state and local levels. Beyond state funding, the Cabinet actively seeks co-investment opportunities with the philanthropic sector. In the current biennium, foundations are investing over \$2 million in partnership with the Early Childhood Education Cabinet.

Building Systems and Accountability Frameworks. Over the past 18 months, the Cabinet and Council have produced:

- A B-9 policy agenda, *Ready by Five, Fine by Nine*
- Additional frameworks specifically for B-3 and Kindergarten through third grade
- An *Early Childhood Investment Plan* outlining a five-year preschool investment proposal.

As required by law, the Cabinet has also set “minimum quality standards” for preschool expansion and is -- with the assistance of the Governor’s Early Childhood Research and Policy Council -- completing: (a) a Quality Rating & Improvement Systems Plan; (b) a Preschool Facilities Expansion Plan; (c) an Early Childhood Workforce Development Plan; and (d) a Results-Based Accountability Plan. All will be submitted to the CT General Assembly by December 2008.

Broader Collaboration Opportunities. The Cabinet is currently engaged in the following collaborations:

- Incorporation of our federal SECCS activity as part of the Cabinet’s B-9 framework
- A new partnership with the Connecticut Youth Vision Team to focus jointly on the needs of young parents and their children
- A partnership with the Connecticut Child Poverty and Prevention Council to fund a key ROI study related to child poverty reduction
- Membership on the newly formed Commissioners’ Data Interoperability Project, and
- Membership on the Governor’s P-20 Education Council.

Value Added of the NGA Grant Opportunity

Although we have made significant progress over the past 18 months, we believe we can address two very important challenges through the peer learning opportunity offered by the NGA. These are outlined below, and we propose to address the first by working on the second.

First, to become a fully-collaborative statewide “policy team” where each agency commits to transformative systems change, we recognize the need to address the following: improved data sharing; fully transparent fiscal information; cross-agency funding opportunities; shared family outreach resources; and the creation of formal cross-agency agreements to fully leverage our state’s early childhood investment in the service of improved child outcomes.

Second, we need a period of highly focused collaborative work to bring together Connecticut’s early care and education (ECE) state and local providers and funders to build an “ECE system” for young children. We have already identified a series of barriers to creating an ECE system and linking it effectively with B-5 child health, mental health, family support and early intervention services. Passage of the federal Improving Head Start Act of 2007, coupled with our current preschool expansion initiatives, create the perfect environment to work on building an ECE system. This system must integrate the state School Readiness Program managed with the State Department of Education, the child care center and subsidy programs managed by the Department of Social Services, Head Start now located in both agencies, and our ECE licensing program managed by the Department of Public Health.

Specifically, we propose to:

- Establish a Cabinet working group on B-5 ECE systems-building

- Utilize the NGA grant to support five two-day facilitated working sessions including state and local ECE stakeholders, and
- Prepare a B-5 ECE Systems Report with policy, practice and partnership recommendations for the Cabinet and the Governor by end of October 2008.

We will also:

- Develop a “sharepoint” electronic resource site for all participants
- Draw on other ECE quality, workforce and facility planning now underway
- Send a team to the NGA Policy Retreat in June 2008, and
- Secure state and philanthropic co-investment for any additional data gathering, materials production and strategic communications identified as necessary to accomplish this undertaking.

A chart of the proposed timetable for these activities is appended at the end of this application.

We believe that this intense focus on building a ECE “system” will present the Cabinet with a broad array of decisions that, when made by the Cabinet’s membership, can help the Cabinet advance to a next level of collaborative management and effectiveness.

Leadership Commitment

If selected, Connecticut will send a team of three individuals, representing the Early Childhood Education Cabinet and the Governor’s Office, to the NGA Policy Retreat for State Early Childhood Advisory Council Leaders (Denver, CO in June 2008). We appreciate the commitment of the NGA to cover travel costs related to that retreat beyond the funding provided by grant award. If asked, we will prepare a Connecticut report on our current activities, accomplishments, and challenges for presentation at the retreat. We look forward to sharing with other states Connecticut’s experiences in the evolution and functioning of our Early Childhood Cabinet and Policy Council.

Measuring Impact

Outcomes associated with this application are largely related to “systems measures.” This application has two components; thus we will describe impact measurements for each below.

1. Early Care and Education (ECE) System-Building Measures	2. Cabinet Development Measures
<p>Systems Measures:</p> <ol style="list-style-type: none"> 1. Recommendations related to cross-agency data sharing 2. Recommendations for a common Professional Development framework for state-funded B-5 ECE programs 3. Recommendation for the elimination of duplicate accountability reports across state funding agencies 4. Analyses of similarities and differences within and across state and federal funding for ECE programs 5. Analysis of local School Readiness Councils’ infrastructure needs to coordinate local community B-5 ECE systems 	<p>System Measures:</p> <ol style="list-style-type: none"> 1. Cabinet members lead and participate in ECE work, including intensive NGA supported working sessions underway 2. Any additional resources needed to support the NGA initiative are secured 3. The Cabinet receives and, as a whole, reviews and acts on ECE System recommendations (items #1-5 from left column) 4. Key state agencies develop agreement(s) to implement System recommendations 5. Cabinet members participate in a formal review of this “collaborative management process” 6. Cabinet shares learning with NGA peer group

Appendix A: Budget Template and Narrative

Cost Category and Narrative	Amount
<p>Consultants, Tools and Materials</p> <p>15 days of consultation, including five 2-day facilitated sessions with the entire team and 5 days of consultation with the Office of the Cabinet and key individual agency participants. At the present time, we have not identified the consultants, but will seek advice from the NGA, if selected as a grantee.</p>	<p align="center">\$6,750 (\$450 per day, 15 days)</p>
<p>Meeting Costs</p> <p>Facility costs (space and meals) for the five 2-day sessions</p>	<p align="center">\$3,000</p>
<p>Total</p>	<p align="center">\$9,750</p>

Note: Any other fiscal costs associated with this initiative will be secured from the Early Childhood Education Cabinet. Such costs may include: data analysis, cost-modeling, web tools, and provider meetings. At this time, we cannot estimate these potential costs.

Appendix B: Membership of the Cabinet and Council

Early Childhood Education Cabinet Members	On both the Cabinet & Council	Early Childhood Research & Policy Council Members
<p>Co-chairs Dr. Janice Gruendel (Governor's Office) Dr. Mark McQuillan (Commissioner, SDE)</p> <p><u>Secretary of OPM</u> Robert Genuario</p> <p><u>Commissioners</u> Higher Education: Michael Meotti DSS: Michael Starkowski DCF: Susan Hamilton DPH: Dr. Robert Galvin DDS: Peter O'Meara</p> <p><u>Commission on Children</u> Elaine Zimmerman, Executive Director</p> <p><u>Co-Chairs CGA Education Committee</u> Representative Andrew Fleischmann Betsy Morgan, representing Senator Tom Gaffey</p> <p><u>Co-Chairs CGA Human Services Committee</u> Rep. Beth Bye, representing Senator Jon Harris Dr. Judith Meyers, representing Representative Peter Villano</p> <p><u>School Readiness Councils</u> Lynda Fosco</p> <p><u>Head Start Association</u> Susan Sponheimer</p>	<p>Gruendel McQuillan Genuario Meotti</p>	<p>Co-Chairs John Rathgeber, President, CBIA David Nee, Exec. Director, Graustein Memorial Fund Michael Meotti, Commissioner, Higher Ed</p> <p><u>Members from Cabinet:</u> Gruendel, McQuillan, Genuario, Meotti</p> <p><u>Members: Business</u> Peter Hurst, President, Community Bank of Bridgeport Roxanne Coady, CEO, RJ Julia Booksellers John Rathgeber, CBIA</p> <p><u>Members: Philanthropy</u> Will Ginsberg, President, Community Foundation of Greater New Haven Susan Dunn, President, UW of Capitol Area David Nee, Graustein Memorial Fund</p> <p><u>Members: Higher Education</u> Dr. Walter Gilliam, Yale University Dr. David Levinson, President, Norwalk Community College Michael Meotti, Commissioner, Higher Ed 1 vacancy</p> <p><u>Members: K-12 Education Leadership</u> CAPSS Executive Director Robert Rader, CABA Jon Yrchik, CEA Sharon Palmer, CT AFT</p> <p><u>Members: Municipalities</u> Thomas Marsh, First Selectman of Chester Sebastian Giuliani, Mayor of Middletown 1 vacancy</p> <p><u>Members: Economic/Workforce Development</u> Marie O'Brian, President, CT Development Authority Mary Ann Hanley, Director, OWC Richard Gray, President, CHEFA</p> <p><u>CT General Assembly:</u> Co-chairs & Ranking members from the Appropriations and Finance Committees</p>

Appendix C: Timelines

Compile required data & documents	Month of April 2008
Create ECE systems working group	Cabinet meeting May 2008
Secure and brief facilitator(s)	May 2008
Facilitator meetings with stakeholder agencies	May 2008
Working group facilitated sessions	May through July 2008
NGA Denver Retreat	June 2008
Draft ECE system proposal	End of July 2008
Provider discussions	August and September 2008
Cabinet deliberation	August and September
Cabinet adoption	End of September 2008
Report to NGA	October 2008