

Executive Summary

Please provide a brief summary of accomplishments, challenges, and lessons learned across the reform areas.

As the first year of the RTT-ELC grant came to a close, Minnesota had started to see rapid progress in moving forward on almost all grant activities outlined in the State's Plan and Statement of Work. As with most RTT-ELC states, Minnesota found the first six months of the grant to be filled with more administrative activities than originally anticipated in the State's application. Although these activities delayed the start of multiple projects, they also helped to create a strong basis for the grant work and ensure the success of the work over the entire grant period. Now that Minnesota has a fully staffed RTT-ELC team and has further refined its processes for accomplishing the work, the State is gaining strong momentum on the work at hand and foresees meeting future performance measures in all components of the grant.

Despite a slower than expected start, Minnesota is pleased with results in the first year of the grant. In year one Minnesota has made Accelerated Pathways to Ratings through the TQIRS, Parent Aware, available statewide to all eligible Early Learning and Development Programs; completed its first round of Parent Aware -full ratings for child care programs; made Early Learning Scholarships available in all four Transformation Zones, and provided Title I PreK Incentive grants in three of the four Transformation Zones. Additionally, supports for Early Childhood Educators, including low cost training and professional development advising for child care providers is beginning to flow out across the state. The Early Childhood Longitudinal Data System's Charter was finalized and endorsed by the Early Learning Council and the Early Childhood Comprehensive Assessment System's workgroup had their first meeting. The Interagency Developmental Screening Taskforce expanded its purpose to include Online Screening and a Child Care Health Consultant was hired and received certification as a Child Care Health Consultant. All of these accomplishments put Minnesota in a good place to continue to achieve the ambitious goals outlined in its State Plan.

Moreover, Minnesota began to see the positive impact of the RTT-ELC grant even before the first funds began flowing out to the system. The news of the RTT-ELC award spread quickly throughout the state and was the catalyst for the early childhood community, stakeholders and partners to begin to mobilize and create coalitions to coordinate efforts in preparation of these new initiatives. Beyond the funds Minnesota received with the RTT-ELC grant, Minnesota is seeing communities and programs collaborate in new and innovate ways in order to increase ELD program quality and access for children with high needs. The strong support throughout the state for RTT-ELC initiatives and early childhood in general has even contributed to budget proposals from the Governor and the state legislature that include substantial increases to the state's investment in early childhood.

A challenge the State continues to work on is developing a communication plan for both internal staff and partners and external programs, providers, partners and stakeholders. Over the last year, the RTT-ELC grant has created a lot of excitement throughout the state and given the state agencies more attention than is accustomed. The Office of Early Learning has learned that having a formal communication plan that identifies the who, what, why, and how for communicating the Office's work is vital to ensure success not only for the grant but for Minnesota's Early Childhood System. By being consistent and proactive in messaging and communicating, Minnesota can ensure coordination, alignment and buy-in of internal and external efforts to develop and support the system.