Governance and Data Workgroup
Survey Responses

What do you think is working in Virginia's current early childhood governance system?

- I am not sure at this time.
- I am not an expert on the current governance system, so I will focus on what I think is most important. First, governance should manage a variety of policies and services to promote efficiency, excellence and equity. My sense is that currently systems are fragmented, and the goals should be to reduce fragmentation, variations in quality, an inequity in programs and services. Second, governance is more a strategy, and changes should be made to achieve critical early childhood goals. I think there should be consensus on these goals.
- I am not clear what Virginia's current early childhood governance system is. We have had and continue to have many different groups meeting together but to my knowledge never one early childhood governance system. That said, there are many people passionate about early childhood and the importance of high quality early childhood programs and services and starting as early as possible with children (birth to age eight). There has been a lot of quality work done through a variety of stakeholder groups and I see those groups as having achieved many goals even without one governance system.
- I think the leadership that VECF has provided is keeping the momentum going, but that we need a formal governance system.

What, if anything, should we consider changing?

- We need an early childhood governance system and one that can maintain itself through changes in state administration including changes in legislators, Commissioners and Governors. Not sure if that will be the role of the new Children's Cabinet, this group or something else but it is definitely needed. Each time there is a change politically we seem to go backwards and lose momentum as initiatives under one Governor are not typically continued by another Governor especially if there is a change in political party. Also having one term Governors makes this even more challenging. We could not apply for a significant federal grant last year because there was no early childhood governance/leadership team in place, the administration was changing and as a result, there were no Commissioners in place to approve and sign off. There are so many high level groups in Virginia with similar goals or overlapping goals related to early childhood. Very confusing who is responsible for what and whether the different groups talk to each other or try to combine efforts or look at gaps. Appears disjointed/fragmented. Would be very helpful to have a clear structure in Virginia for oversight of early childhood policies/goals/funding etc. Also, funding opportunities through federal grants now all require collaboration among state and local agencies. We have had difficulty finding easy ways to share funding for a common purpose as government procedures typically do not allow for this. The State ECMH Coordinator position is funded by 3 state agencies but it took 2 years to finally find a way to bring the funding together because state agencies were not set up to do this. Is there a way this could be looked at to allow different agencies easier and faster ways to do such collaboration?
- It would be beneficial to have a high-level and official position that serves as the leader and coordinator for all early childhood initiatives. There is a need for leadership that can bridge the public and private sectors, while also being an official part of state government--we do not currently have both in an official capacity. It would be ideal to have a non-profit organization empowered with an official leadership role in early childhood, and have authority to receive state dollars as a state agency. Ideally, there would be an organization, such as VECF, that housed a state agency or was otherwise empowered to accept state

dollars without competitive procurement or sole source requirements. The Code of Virginia already has examples of such organizations, including the Center for Innovative Technology. § 2.2-2221.01. Designation of staff of Center for Innovative Technology. The Board of the Authority may designate the President and staff of the Center for Innovative Technology to carry out the day-to-day operations and activities of the Authority and to perform such other duties as may be directed by the Board. (2008, cc. 70, 610.)

- We should get commitment from all of the EC agencies to participate, perhaps through an MOU. I'm not sure if the effort is funded.
- I think you can look at three kinds of governance structures--coordination and collaboration among agencies (when administrative authority is located in different agencies and secretariats); consolidation (where multiple programs are administered by the same agency); and creation of a single agency focused on early childhood education and care. I have no view as to which of these governance models would work best for Virginia, but I think one can examine the advantages and challenges of each of these structures.

What do you think our priorities should be in regards to the use of data in early childhood services?

- Need a mechanism to share data. Lots of data out there being collected but also gaps in critical data needed. There is currently no mechanism to link the data available. Have had funded projects to look at this in Virginia for early childhood but no ongoing funding to put in place the recommendations. This is needed so we can make informed decisions about our youngest children in Virginia by having clear consistent data indicators and the ability to review the results and to share this with each other.
- The first question is why are we collecting data--to assess program performance and quality; help determine access to high-quality programs; develop and analyze child outcomes. The second question is how is the data used--who has access to the data and how can it be used to guide decision making and promote continuous improvement.
- Through a facilitated series of meetings, several agencies identified the following high-level priority or "burning" questions. I also have a more detailed list of questions that agencies developed in this process.
    - How can Virginia ensure that children and families can access early childhood programs and services to facilitate child health and development, and increase children's school readiness?
    - How can Virginia determine whether early childhood program funds are used effectively to maximize return on investment for taxpayers?
    - How can Virginia improve early childhood program quality to maximize the benefits to children and families?
    - How can Virginia improve the early childhood workforce while ensuring that families can afford the supports they need?
- What EC programs lead to student success in elementary school?
- At this point, it would be helpful to get a broad understanding of the various agencies providing services in the early childhood arena, a description of the types of services offered, and the number and age-span of children impacted.

What questions do you think we should answer about early childhood governance?

- What aspects of existing governance structures are currently strong, in that they efficiently use available resources to strengthen the early childhood system, benefiting children,

families, and communities? Where are the gaps in Virginia's existing governance structures, and what are viable options to fill those gaps? Are there overlaps and gaps in programs that results from distributed governance structures? How can this committee support existing efforts to increase and sustain political leadership for strengthening Virginia's early childhood system, recognizing the executive and legislative election cycle.

- The questions that I raised in the above answers, regarding how to promote efficiency, excellence and equity. The development of consensus on early childhood goals would help determine what may be the most effective governance system.
- The Who, What, Where, How, and When needs to be clear in governing early childhood in Virginia. Who (agency or entity) is identified to govern early childhood? Who else will be included or have input (stakeholders)? Who reports to whom? What will be governed? What procedures are needed? Where will this be done? How will this be done? What timelines need to be established? etc.
- Who are the participating agencies and what is their level of commitment? What are the policy questions that need answering? Who is in a position to do research to answer the questions? How will the answers be communicated and to whom? Who is in charge? Is there funding for this? Do we need a neutral third party to facilitate governance (VECF?)?
- Which state agencies or other entities provide large-scale services to preschool-aged children? Which areas of the commonwealth are in need of additional services for preschool-aged children? What additional services are needed? Why are services not reaching these areas?

What questions do you think we should answer about early childhood data?

- What data indicators do we already have? What data indicators are missing but needed? How will we have data systems talk to each other or share data? What is needed to do this? How will the data be used? What reports are needed that clearly summarize key data so we have a picture of Virginia's youngest children and the ability to look at trends over time. How do we evaluate what we are doing?
- The two questions that I raised above would guide discussion about early childhood data. Since I am not an expert in this area, I am assuming that child-level data across different early childhood programs are not all linked. I am not certain whether Virginia can link child level data to K-12 data, social services data and state health data. I am also not certain whether Virginia has a data governance structure that allows for secure data sharing among agencies and management of the security and use of data. Similarly, I do not know whether data is well coordinated among state and federally funded programs.
- What is the quality of the available data? What is the accessibility of the data?
- What critical data are missing to help the state understand the influence of taxpayer dollars on children's school readiness and lifelong success? How can these data be collected? (Note: This isn't just about VPI dollars. There are a lot of taxpayer dollars wrapped up in child care subsidies and other programs that need to be assessed). To what extent is the Commonwealth lacking resources to use existing data to answer important questions and to inform the policy and program improvement strategies? If resources become available, what are the highest priority questions to begin answering?
- Same as above.

What should be our goals in regards to early childhood governance and this workgroup?

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- Identify politically feasible approaches to strengthen governance and leadership for the distributed early childhood services currently administered at the state level (includes state and federal programs) - identify Virginia's highest priority policy questions that may be answered through research using state administrative data - identify and propose feasible ways to fill gaps in critical data needed to answer priority questions
- Identify participating agencies. Secure agency commitment. Define policy questions. Define "rules of engagement" - who will have access to the data and for what reasons, who will approve research and research artifacts? (the VLDS is a good example of work already done in this area)
- I may need more information about our purpose but it is my understanding that we need to come up with recommendations to move forward to the Council and ultimately the Governor. I am not clear if this is a short term group or we will continue beyond this initial responsibility. Could we recommend that we determine common language so we are all talking from the same page when we use common terms in Virginia? For example, the word "children" is often used but does not always include children birth to age 8 when applied to funding or services for example. What is the vision we want for early childhood in Virginia? From the vision can be the mission and eventually the plan for how to do this. Recommend ways we could develop these for Virginia. For example: Recommend that we look at how we can build off of existing resources and initiatives in Virginia and look for ways to use information already identified as needed in Virginia as well as ideas for how to fiscally support or find other resources to support these efforts. For example, Virginia's Plan for Smart Beginnings attempted to pull all strategic plans of agencies serving early childhood into one strategic plan for Virginia. Although the initial plan still exists, it needs to be reviewed and updated. Could we recommend that this be looked at together so we can build off of it? Can we identify other key work that has been done in Virginia and do the same? For example: There were a set of recommendations developed by early childhood stakeholder groups to move forward to the Early Childhood Advisory Council (ECAC) last year but then the ECAC was dissolved. Could we look at those recommendations to see what is still applicable? There are other key stakeholder groups meeting on a regular basis that have put in place some key initiatives i.e. the Virginia Cross Sector Professional Development Leadership Team, the Early Childhood Mental Health Virginia Initiative and Advisory Board etc. Can we take a look at those efforts and their recommendations as well as identify others to do the same? Could we Identify and recommend a mechanism that allows early childhood stakeholders/leaders/funders etc. to come together on a regular basis to evaluate where we are and where we need to move to, to share what is happening under various initiatives and to pull efforts together?
- Provide an overview of services offered across the state. Identify areas of overlap or gaps in services.
- First, to get satisfactory answers to key questions that would give us a snapshot of the current governance and data systems. Second, to review Virginia's critical early childhood goals. Then, to look at coordination and collaboration among state education, social service and health programs and data collection, dissemination and use of data. Finally, to look at alternative models of governance and data collection and use to determine whether any changes in these areas would be beneficial to achieve Virginia's early childhood goals.