SLDS Webinar Summary

Planning for Early Childhood Data Use

Currently, states are examining early childhood for its potential benefits to K12 and postsecondary education. However, these benefits are difficult to assess because of incomplete early childhood data in statewide longitudinal data systems (SLDSs).

The need for data can pressure state education agencies (SEAs) to quickly increase the collection of—and access to—early childhood data. However, in order to successfully facilitate the use of these data, SLDS staff must proceed thoughtfully. Careful planning of data use will anchor the P-20W system with concrete and tangible needs that are actionable. In effect, the agency will ensure that appropriate, relevant data are made available to their primary users, who will then be better able to inform key early childhood decisions.

This document examines the planning phase of the Early Childhood Data Use Framework through the experiences of Arkansas's and Washington State's SLDS P-20W agencies.

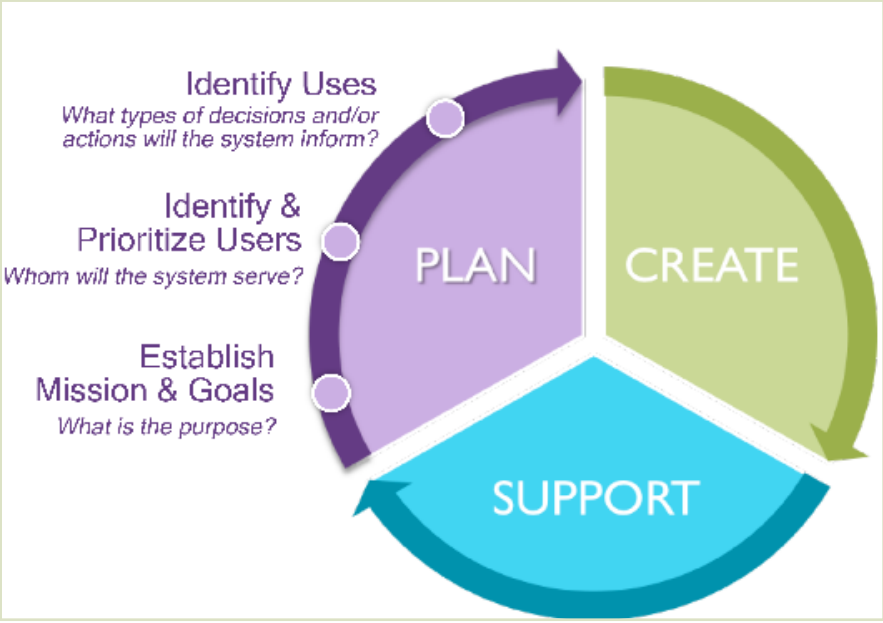

Figure 1. SST Early Childhood Data Use Framework

1. Establish Mission and Goals

The first step in planning for early childhood data use is to establish a clear mission that is understood and supported by all stakeholders. The mission will help to focus the work and guide future decisions.

In establishing its mission, Arkansas's early childhood data use project adopted the mission of its larger P-20W agency, thus acknowledging the project's role in providing data to support the larger system. Alternatively, a project may choose to develop a unique mission; for example, the mission of Washington's early childhood data use project is to "Create a data governance structure to support data sharing related to early learning research questions and program effectiveness."

This product of the Institute of Education Sciences (IES) was developed with the help of knowledgeable staff from state education agencies and partner organizations. The content of this brief was derived from an SLDS monthly topical webinar. The views expressed do not necessarily represent those of the IES SLDS Grant Program. We thank the following people for their valuable contributions:

Webinar Presenters:
Sarah Argue
Arkansas Research Center

Melissa Beard
State of Washington Education Research & Data Center

Moderator:
Missy Cochenour
State Support Team

For more information on the IES SLDS Grant Program, additional SLDS publications, or for support with system development or use, please visit http://nces.ed.gov/programs/SLDS.