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1. For states that consolidated ECE governance in an existing or new agency, what has success looked like? And what policy or leadership decisions have been critical in making the shift as effective and least disruptive to programs and families as possible? (i.e. could be dedicated funding, a children's cabinet/advisory council to get continuous stakeholder input, a focus on workforce retention/pay, a single budget for ECE, a long transition timeline, etc).

Success for states that have consolidated governance has generally started with improved processes. Instead of forcing providers and families to navigate a complex system, they simplify the system by harmonizing and unifying financing, definitions of quality, oversight and monitoring, and more. When states have changed governance structures they have always worked to ensure that on Day 1 the systems were at least as functional as they were before – and in the long term that those systems are revamped to be a lot more functional. So one of the keys to initial success is having strong business processes that ensure continued reliability for the providers and families that depend on it. Those continue to matter in the long term -- as do feedback loops and a strong culture of data use, ensuring that field intelligence is constantly collected and acted upon.

2. Have any states improved governance without a full structural reorganization? What has success looked like in those states?

States can certainly make incremental improvements in coordination, and some have. But fundamentally there are certain challenges states face – including the complexity of financing, varying definitions of quality, uneven approaches to oversight and monitoring, shortages of qualified personnel, and more – that are exceptionally difficult to solve if it requires collaboration among multiple mid-level agency managers who are not fully empowered to act. In other policy areas it's taken as a given that an agency head-level official has the authority to act to solve critical problems, and a team of people at his or her disposal to do so; in early childhood that has simply not been the case, which is part of why so many of the problems remain unsolved.

3. How can states best sustain the benefits of governance reform as gubernatorial administrations or lead agency personnel change?

Enacting governance reform in legislation helps to create stability and durability, but even some states with changes made by executive order have seen governance reforms persist across administrations. Once the change has been made, though, early childhood is like any other policy area: it's only worth sustaining the existing structures if they're actually getting the job done. If state government clearly defines its role with relation to providers and families, reorganizes itself around its essential functions, and empowers and supports communities to act in ways that leverage their unique advantages, governance reform has a strong chance of being successful across administrations; if it's

not doing those things, then there's only so much it will accomplish regardless of who's in charge. But if the state has built functional systems and advocates have educated gubernatorial candidates about the value of the system, then it's possible to achieve continuity across governors in early childhood just as it is in any other field. One of the weaknesses of existing early childhood governance structures is that they do not create roles that would be appealing to strong leaders with exceptional systems-building skills; the states that have been most successful are those that have rejected the idea of a leaderless system, and instead have created roles for strong leaders that successive governors have the opportunity to fill.

4. Pre-k, child care and Head Start in Texas each have different rules and standards to follow and different funding models. Have other states moved towards applying consistent standards across programs and, in turn, expected (and seen) similar increases in child outcomes across settings as a result? What is realistic to expect?

Yes. This has been a central focus of governance changes in states like Louisiana and Virginia, where the ability to create a unified expectations and supports have been at the heart of governance reforms. In both states the early returns suggest improvements in quality at the provider level – and not improvements in quality as measured by bureaucratic inputs, but improvements in quality as measured by actual child experiences. At this time both of those reforms are too new to demonstrate long-term child outcomes, but the early returns are promising.

5. Is there any other lesson in governance design or implementation that you want to share?

Leadership matters in early childhood just like in every other policy area. Early childhood for years has lacked the structures to support great leadership, but increasingly states are developing those structures. Simply put, there is a whole category of leadership – agency heads and empowered deputies – that have long been taken for granted in education, human services, health, and any number of other fields; in early childhood, historically we haven't had that. Historically the seniormost state government positions in early childhood have not been systems development jobs, they've been programmatic oversight jobs. Those programmatic oversight jobs are critical, to be sure, but the problems facing Texas's early childhood community will only be solved by empowered leaders using systems-level approaches and sophisticated business analysis of timely data. Until those roles exist, the ceiling for what can be accomplished will remain artificially low.