



# Preliminary Summary of Lessons Learned for Nemours Project HOPE April 2, 2019

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Altarum has been tracking lessons learned throughout the planning and implementation stages of Nemours' Project HOPE. The following is a description of lessons learned as of March 29, 2019. In addition, we include previous reports on lessons learned and project accomplishments and challenges. This analysis of lessons learned is based on: interviews conducted with state key informants during kick-off meetings in Florida and Oklahoma; a focus group conducted with Florida cross-sector state stakeholder group (CSSSG) members; a review of baseline surveys conducted with state HOPE partners; observations made during the state kick-off meetings and in project meetings involving state partners and TA providers; observations made during Equity, Diversity, and Inclusion (EDI) trainings that took place in Oklahoma and Florida; participation in the HOPE Consortium Evaluation Work Group; an examination of documents on the Nemours and Consortium Basecamp sites; and discussions of lessons learned conducted during Nemours Team meetings which include Nemours' staff, the individual state TA consultants, and the Institute for Public Health Innovation (IPHI) which conducts the EDI training and serves as the project's EDI consultant.

## Equity training inclusive of community members is both beneficial and challenging, especially when there are language barriers.

Oklahoma invited a group of parents from Oklahoma City whose primary language was Spanish to the EDI training that was held using HOPE resources. The participants enriched the training and provided critically important perspectives on the challenges faced by Spanish-speaking parents in Oklahoma. There were some challenges particularly getting the training started. The initial goal was to have one of the Oklahoma Partnership for School Readiness (OPSR) staff who was fluent in Spanish simultaneously translate the discussion. That proved to be unworkable because the concepts in the training are complex and hard to simultaneously translate, especially when the translator is located in the same room where the training is taking place. Eventually one of the parent participants who spoke fluent Spanish and English was able to step in and translate for the other parents. This improvisation proved to be successful enough to enable all participants to benefit from the presence of the parents. The main challenge after that was the lack of Spanish translations of some of the handouts and slides. Based on this experience including parents in trainings is highly recommended, but requires careful planning and preparation ahead of time.

## Organizational Capacity can be an important determinant of success, but it is challenging to try and measure before an initiative begins.

Any measurement of organizational capacity that took place prior to choosing HOPE grantees would have had limited usefulness because the CSSSG has significantly changed or evolved from what was proposed in the state application in three of the four states Nemours is working in. Allowing this level of flexibility in terms of finalizing a CSSSG was critical to enabling states to work towards achieving the HOPE goals. In addition to changes in CSSSG Teams, unforeseen circumstances mean capacity may shift significantly due to increased demand on resources. The best illustration of this is Oklahoma's experience with the Preschool Development Grant Birth to Five (PDG). PDG requires grantees to spend a relatively large amount of money, considerably larger than their HOPE grant, in a very short time period. The Oklahoma lead organization for HOPE is also the lead organization for PDG. Being awarded PDG presents great opportunities for OPSR as an organization and in terms of amplifying the work



being done under HOPE, but it also presents major capacity challenges. According to their 2018 Annual Report, the OPSR expenditures for Fiscal Year (FY) 2018 were just over \$733,000. The organization peak expenditures since FY 2010 were \$2.87 million in FY 2013.<sup>1</sup> PDG provides \$3.1 million in funds that have to be at least allocated by the end of the Federal Fiscal Year in September 2019. Any capacity assessment of OPSR prior to being awarded the grant could not have included this factor since PDG was not part of the picture at the time the grant was being awarded.

### Flexible system building focused spending such as that provided by HOPE can accelerate progress on initiatives that have been identified as beneficial, but which lack a clear Federal or state funding stream and which do not have an obvious agency “home”.

System initiatives often struggle to find funding because of a lack of a specified funding stream and because their inter-sector focus often mean they do not have an obvious home-agency. Even though a lack of effective resource and referral mechanisms and developmental assessment processes are often seen as a challenge to providing effective early childhood services it may be difficult to find a regular funding source or to implement plans to address them. A flexible funding source may help spur action that hopefully ultimately leads to sustainability of effective processes. An example is Washington State’s effort to implement the Help Me Grow model for ensuring that young children and their families are referred to needed and appropriate resources. Statewide leaders and multiple communities in Washington State identified connecting families to services as an issue and determined that Help Me Grow, a model initially developed in Connecticut that has spread to multiple states, had strong potential to address the issues that had been identified. Both the state and individual communities have faced challenges trying to implement the system because of the factors cited above and the lack of available state financial support. Washington State is using HOPE resources to support a working group including representatives from communities that have begun to or hope to implement Help Me Grow, along with state representatives from public and private agencies. State and local engagement are both needed to design a statewide system to benefit all children that works effectively at the community level. HOPE has the potential to accelerate the implementation of a solution to a widely identified problem in a way that can support state-local co-creation of a statewide Help Me Grow system.

Florida’s work in ECCS is similar in that it is attempting to use the lessons learned around implementing developmental screening in a select set of communities to inform efforts to improve screening statewide. HOPE provides an opportunity to amplify that effort by including a focus on social and emotional well-being, extending the work to another community, and by building on the strengths of the ECCS initiative so far in developing community-based leadership.

### States are engaging communities in a variety of ways.

In its initial design, the main way that states were seen as engaging communities involved the selection of a single focal community for the HOPE initiative. However, all four states have engaged multiple communities in their HOPE work. Florida’s HOPE-funded EDI Training involved community-focused representatives from Tallahassee, Escambia County, the Tampa area, Orlando, and two neighborhoods in Miami. Florida is using their HOPE resources to expand their ECCS initiative to Orlando, but some of the activities and lessons will benefit their existing ECCS communities in the

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<sup>1</sup> Oklahoma Partnership for School Readiness. *Oklahoma Partnership for School Readiness Annual Report FY 2018 (July 1, 2017-June 30, 2018)*. Downloaded from: [https://docs.wixstatic.com/ugd/da6696\\_cfcbaf2e740b463a9953ba749ff6ae69.pdf](https://docs.wixstatic.com/ugd/da6696_cfcbaf2e740b463a9953ba749ff6ae69.pdf).



Liberty City neighborhood of Miami and in the Town 'n' Country community in Northwest Hillsborough County. As suggested by the turnout at the training the lead agency for HOPE, The Florida Association of Healthy Start Coalitions, is also able to use its connections with other organizations across the state to bring in people from a range of communities who can benefit. As noted above, Washington State has brought multiple communities to the table to develop a strategy for implementing Help Me Grow. The communities involved in the Washington HOPE initiative include King County, Pierce County, Whatcom County, and Yakima County. New Jersey's NOW initiative is based in Essex County, but the state leadership has expressed an interest in doing work in southern New Jersey counties that receive less attention when it comes to issues of inequities despite having high-levels of poverty and facing a myriad of challenges. Oklahoma is working to select a focal community where NOW/Vital Village will provide support that likely will involve partnerships with tribal organizations, but at the same time it has engaged parents from Oklahoma City to participate in EDI training.

### States are developing approaches to engaging families.

In addition to, and often as part of, their community-engagement work States are developing strategies for engaging families in their HOPE work. As noted above, Oklahoma invited family representatives to their EDI training and, as noted in the November 30, 2018 Lessons Learned report included below, they are using HOPE to support a SenseMaker project to obtain input from families and providers on challenges in accessing services and resources. Their draft questions for families were:

- Tell us about a time when you were able to support your child or family by overcoming barriers.
- Tell us about a time when you were unable to support your child or family due to things out of your control.

In its TA role, Altarum suggested they narrow the questions somewhat to focus on the period of a parent and child's life they are most interested in for the HOPE project.

- Thinking back to when you were pregnant, gave birth, or the first year of your child's life, tell us about a time when you overcame barriers for yourself, your baby, or your family.
- During the same period, tell us about a time when you were unable to fully care for yourself, your baby, or your family.

As noted in the previous Lessons Learned report, this part of Oklahoma's HOPE work will showcase an innovative attempt to obtain parent input and provide lessons learned for other states interested in similar techniques.

Florida is using HOPE resources to send parent leaders who have been involved with the ECCS project and HOPE to leadership training at COFI which stands for Community Organizing and Family Issues. COFI trains parents in Family Focused Organizing which empowers them to make changes in their own lives, families, and communities. The training includes a focus on policy and systems change by training leaders to create a community-based policy agenda that starts with common concerns raised by parents, such as childcare and safety and giving them tools to communicate their ideas and concerns to decision-makers and to build partnerships with professionals to develop programs and policies that work.<sup>2</sup> As noted in the March 29, 2019 Ripple Effects Report this training has the potential to have impacts well beyond the scope of HOPE work.

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<sup>2</sup> COFI. "The COFI Way." Accessed at: <http://www.cofionline.org/the-cofi-way/introduction/>



## HOPE States Have Begun to Connect with Each Other

Nemours has begun to hold joint calls that include representatives from all Nemours' HOPE states. As a result of the first joint call the Florida team is connecting Washington to Florida's Help Me Grow coordinator. This will give Florida an opportunity to learn about Washington's experience with Help Me Grow as they seek to build a statewide Help Me Grow model. Washington is also planning on connecting with Oklahoma to learn more about Oklahoma's work with Tribes because Washington also has possible opportunities to work with a tribal community.

## New Jersey represents the state where HOPE has faced the biggest challenges

Of all the states Nemours is working in New Jersey has been the most challenging to get traction to enable steady progress or the implementation of innovative activities. Among the reasons for this are:

- The state was experiencing a change in administrations that is creating opportunities for those focused on early childhood, but also created tremendous uncertainty at the time that HOPE made its initial entry into the state. This uncertainty made it difficult to determine the lead group in the state given that it was unclear whether the interagency group that had existed would survive the change in administrations.
- The New Jersey approach involves bringing together three distinct organizations (Nemours, BUILD, and Vital Village/NOW) to develop a common, or at least coordinated, approach to systems change at both the state and community-level. Determining an approach that benefits from the strengths and insights of each organization has been challenging.
- New Jersey is a difficult place in which to develop an initiative designed to focus on strong feedback loops between states and local communities. State leadership indicate that they are limited by "home rule" restraints and traditions which they suggest limit their ability to engage local communities in an effective way. Local communities are skeptical that their voices are listened to at the state level. The state created County Councils for Young Children as part of the Race to the Top initiative which were designed to provide a Forum for residents and families to have their voices heard. At least one state team member suggested that that feedback was not regularly provided back to the communities on the issues raised in these Councils.
- There is a great deal of skepticism within the state about the multitude of recent federal, state, local and philanthropic initiatives focused on capacity building around health and racial equity. There is a concern over a lack of coordination among the initiatives and that carries over into skepticism about HOPE.



# Preliminary Summary of Lessons Learned for Nemours Project HOPE November 30, 2018

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Altarum has been tracking lessons learned throughout the planning and implementation stages of Nemours' Project HOPE. The following is a description of lessons learned as of November 30, 2018. In addition, we include previous reports on lessons learned and project accomplishments and challenges. This analysis of lessons learned is based on: interviews conducted with state key informants during kick-off meetings in Florida and Oklahoma; a review of baseline surveys conducted with state HOPE partners; observations made during the state kick-off meetings and in project meetings involving state partners and TA providers; meetings with Consortium members; an examination of documents on the Nemours and Consortium Basecamp sites; and discussions of lessons learned conducted during Nemours Team meetings which include Nemours' staff, the individual state TA consultants, and the Institute for Public Health Innovation (IPHI) which is Nemours' equity, diversity, and inclusion (EDI) consultant.

**There is wide variability among the HOPE states and between partner agencies in experience and training in equity, diversity, and inclusion (EDI) and the degree to which an equity lens has been applied to work being done in early childhood.**

The initial state key informant interviews in Florida and Oklahoma as well as the HOPE application process indicated that there is a strong variability between states and between agencies in exposure to EDI training and the extent an equity lens is being used to address early childhood issues and programs. Key informant in Oklahoma suggested an equity lens had not been a big part of early childhood initiatives in the state and it had only begun to emerge recently as an issue getting serious attention. The focus on EDI and an equity lens was being driven by an increased focus on these issues from Federal agencies and other funding partners. The state Medicaid agency was somewhat of an exception and had been working on an initiative to address infant mortality that included both an equity and community-level focus.

The Florida Department of Health had requirements for staff to undergo equity training mostly through on-line training and other expectations around equity, but there was limited work around issues related to equity within the division that submitted the initial HOPE application, though there were indications of other EDI work in other divisions and at the community level. The Florida Office of Early Learning had put a strong focus on attempting to address equity issues including among its local partners and was taking part in facilitated sessions designed to identify and address these issues. Interviews with HOPE applicants and subsequent discussions with Washington and New Jersey also revealed variability in the level of training and the degree to which an equity lens was being applied to various topics in early childhood.

**The wide variability among states and partners related to EDI requires a tailored approach to capacity building.**

Organizations with experience in EDI capacity building have often developed standardized trainings that are designed to help teams who go through the training by ensuring they share a common language related to EDI and develop a common knowledge and understanding. These trainings can be tremendously beneficial, but because the level of exposure to these types of training has increased and the variability between states and agencies in exposure has also increased the need for more



varied approaches to building capacity in EDI has also increased.

Some states are early in the process and can benefit from the type of training often done through the typical standardized approaches of EDI consultant organizations. The Oklahoma cross-sector state stakeholder group (CSSSG) decided that was the exact training they needed and IPHI will conduct a training with them during the first week of December. The exact needs of the other states in regard to EDI capacity building are still being determined but there are some indications that they will vary. Washington state team members appear to have had more exposure to EDI training than Oklahoma.

The Florida CSSSG has received equity training and support as part of its work on the Early Childhood Comprehensive Systems (ECCS) grant and New Jersey has received some equity training, but the Consortium members are discussing what additional training and support may be needed and how best to deliver that. Nemours chose IPHI as its EDI contractor specifically because of its willingness to tailor trainings to the varying needs of HOPE states.

### Federal agencies and national initiatives have played a critical role in building capacity and in developing initiatives involving early childhood systems building and EDI.

The New Jersey Department of Children and Families application made it clear that the state early childhood system has been shaped by the state's experience with Race to the Top including the development of a more integrated data system and a cross-agency collaborative body. An Oklahoma key informant focused on early childhood mental health noted that equity has not received a great deal of attention in conversations she has had within the state. However, the issue was increasingly coming up at conferences and in materials being shared by the Substance Abuse and Mental Health Services Administration.

The Florida Office of Early Learning has been relying on support from national partners as it seeks to address equity issues among its state and community constituency. Washington has relied on a variety of national funding sources and support partners as it has worked to strengthen its early childhood system. In a more recent example that highlights the potential for the HOPE grants to have a long last effect, Oklahoma's Preschool Development Grant submitted to the U.S. Department of Health and Human Services had a stronger equity and inclusion focus because of Oklahoma's involvement with the HOPE grant (see Altarum's November 30, 2018 Ripple Effects Report for additional details).

### When multiple partners submit applications for system building grants like HOPE there are benefits to bringing them together to try and determine a common approach.

The division within the Department of Health in Florida that applied for HOPE had been engaged in extensive work in early care and education promoting healthy eating and physical activity. However, they had not closely coordinated that work with the Florida Office of Early Learning (OEL) which has primary responsibility at the state level for planning, funding, and supporting early care and education. OEL initiatives include efforts related to Quality Rating and Improvement. As a result of being brought together for Project HOPE, after submitting two separate applications, the two agencies developed contacts and planned to begin discussions as to whether it makes sense to integrate Department of Health efforts to recognize child care centers doing excellent work related to healthy eating and physical activity promotion with OEL's work related to recognizing high quality child care centers



(additional discussion of this collaboration is included in Altarum’s November 30, 2018 Ripple Effects Report).

As noted in the “Accomplishments and Challenges” section of the April 30, 2018 planning period final report included below, and the November 30, 2018 Ripple Effects Report the process of asking the three separate Kansas applicants to combine their efforts had led to discussions among the applicants about how best to work together on future initiatives, despite not receiving funding from HOPE.

### **The initial applicants for system building grants like HOPE and the initial proposed state teams for these grants may not be the best suited to achieving the goals of the grant opportunity.**

Two of the four states where Nemours is working made substantial adjustments to their initial plans when determining which state team was best positioned to serve as the CSSSG for Project HOPE. Florida’s grant applications did not mention the ECCS grant, but the OEL application was focused on promoting mental health. In the course of planning work it was determined that the ECCS initiative is playing a lead role in promoting early childhood mental health in the state and it made sense to make the ECCS Advisory Group the CSSSG in order to best coordinate work in this area. The Washington State application was a joint effort between two early childhood initiatives, Essentials for Childhood and Frontiers of Innovation. The initial intent after the state was awarded the grant was that these two initiatives would work together to develop a CSSSG. For a variety of reasons it was difficult to make this arrangement work and it was ultimately decided that the Essentials for Childhood Steering Committee and Systems Workgroup would take on the role of CSSSG and Frontiers of Innovation would have limited involvement in the project.

These experiences show that the time limited process for submitting grant applications does not always result in optimal outcomes when it comes to determining how an initiative should be structured. Meeting the goals of the states required discussions and consultations ultimately resulting in different grant leadership than initially planned in the state applications.

### **Major grant opportunities offer opportunities for synergy, but also absorb tremendous amounts of energy among key early childhood state team members.**

A major Federal early childhood opportunity was offered during the initial planning phase for the HOPE states. The Federal Preschool Development Grant (PDG) is a multi-million dollar grant opportunity intended to support states to “develop, update, or implement a strategic plan that facilitates collaboration and coordination among existing programs of early childhood care and education.” Preparing for that application consumed a great deal of energy on the part of state team members in Florida, Oklahoma, and Washington.

The work on the application offered some possibilities for synergy. For example, Florida requested and received support on some data issues related to the grant that built on work that was done in preparation for their State HOPE Kick-off Meeting. Oklahoma indicated their grant application had a stronger EDI focus as a result of their participation in HOPE (more details are included in Altarum’s November 30, 2018 Ripple Effects Report). In addition, the grant application process created an opportunity for collaboration that emerged from the connection between Consortium members. BUILD has resources that enabled it to provide technical assistance to applicants for PDG. As a result of the relationship between BUILD and Nemours that developed through HOPE, Debbie Chang of



Nemours conducted a webinar designed for applicants covering partnering with Medicaid in early childhood work. This webinar was an excellent learning opportunity and exposed a large number of states to information about effective partnering with an agency that is frequently not included in early childhood system building initiatives. These lessons are timely in that anecdotally it appears that there are greater opportunities for partnerships between Medicaid and other state agencies as a result of the changes that have resulted from the Affordable Care Act. In addition, Nemours' Oklahoma consultant who is an expert on working with tribes, participated in Build's PDG application support activities and produced a document providing advice to states interested in working with tribes which used language from the HOPE project (additional details are included in Altarum's November 30, 2018 Ripple Effects Report). While there were a number of positive developments resulting from the PDG opportunity it did require diverting energy from HOPE. The tremendous amount of time required to develop the grant application impeded the ability of states to focus on moving forward with their HOPE planning.

### Choosing the best communities to work with for projects such as this is challenging

There are communities with higher levels of capacity and greater experience in many states who are sometimes eager to participate in initiatives like HOPE. Tulsa in Oklahoma contacted the state team and requested to be the local community partner for HOPE because they had heard about the project through informal channels. Tulsa is a community that has a strong commitment to early childhood and addressing EDI issues. Local foundations have invested a tremendous sum of money in these areas and Tulsa would be an outstanding partner in many ways. However, the Oklahoma CSSSG is rightly concerned that the need is greater in other areas of the state and that Tulsa could make progress on these issues without any added support from HOPE. One thing they are interested in doing is trying to bring some of the relevant lessons learned in Tulsa to other parts of the state. At this point in time Oklahoma may be leaning more toward a rural community with a large American Indian population and tribal partners. Making progress in such an area is likely to be more challenging than in a community like Tulsa.

The New Jersey CSSSG has begun to discuss similar issues. Discussions of disparities and issues like infant mortality immediately lead to a focus on Newark and Camden. These cities have received a great deal of attention from funders and state agencies. The CSSSG has decided it would be useful to pay more attention to other communities and is leaning towards focusing part of its HOPE efforts in the southern part of the state which tends to get less attention when it comes to disparities.

### States are beginning to strategize about how to build stronger state-community connections and state-community feedback loops which will be both challenging and a potential source for innovative efforts that can be shared with other states.

States have begun to discuss how to build stronger state-community connections and to use information on the lived experience of the people in communities impacted by inequities as shown in the examples below.

Oklahoma is likely to use SenseMaker® as a tool for collecting information on lived experience from communities to inform how it works in communities. SenseMaker is described as "a narrative-based research methodology that helps practitioners understand the factors that make up complex problems. Participants in a SenseMaker survey share an experience in response to a prompting





question and answer several questions related to what's working and what's not working, how people feel, and who they rely on. SenseMaker allows researchers to be inclusive of many voices and see reality through community members' eyes while identifying patterns and emerging trends."<sup>3</sup> The University of Kansas Center for Public Partnerships and Research (CPPR) has given the Oklahoma CSSSG a proposal for doing this work and the state is discussing options for how best to use it including considering options of conducting this process before selecting a community to inform the selection or after to gather deeper data in the selected community. Assuming, as is almost certain, Oklahoma uses the tool their experience will help inform states and communities about whether a tool like this can be effective and how the information collected can be used. As a point of context, the CPPR team is led by Jackie Counts who previously led the Kansas State ECCS effort back when ECCS was a state-level system building initiative and was the lead for Kansas' Children's Cabinet and Trust Fund Application for HOPE. She is someone with extensive experience in early childhood system building initiatives and likely able to optimize the usefulness of SenseMaker for this particular application.

New Jersey's CSSSG discussed how they had created County Councils for Young Children as a way of getting local input when they were implementing their Race to the Top plan. One of the participants indicated there was a need to go further because they had not succeeded in creating a feedback loop in which the state acted on the information the communities were providing. HOPE presents an opportunity to use the lessons learned from Race to the Top to enhance this effort.

As described below in the next lesson, Washington and other states where BMC's NOW is operating provides opportunities to learn how community-centered initiatives can help inform state work while not compromising on being driven by a community-developed agenda.

**Community-centered initiatives are important components of efforts to address disparities, but the more community-driven they are the more challenging it can be when trying to also use them to strengthen state-community connections.**

Boston Medical Center's (BMC) NOW model is community driven in the strongest sense of the word. Communities determine the focus and decide what if anything they will share with outside actors such as state agencies. There are important reasons why BMC has created a model that empowers communities to make this choice. However, it does present challenges when one of the goals of the consortium collaboration is to strengthen state community connections and feedback loops. The community level goals may or may not align with the work of the state CSSSG and community participants in the NOW learning community may or may not put an emphasis on engaging and collaborating with state entities.

A Nemours HOPE Team consultant attended the Community Action Lab conducted by NOW in Whatcom County, Washington. The observer summarized the meeting this way, "The Whatcom community is doing deep and important work that is, and needs to remain, community focused and driven. It is not currently focused on how to partner with the state or its processes. At this time, there is no reason to have active coordination between the state and community level grants, or between Nemours and BMC, as both efforts are establishing new relationships and work strategies. That said, there are ways the work can naturally be connected to what evolves at the state level over time. This might occur through a number of existing structures [for example, the Project Director for Whatcom

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<sup>3</sup> National Child Abuse and Neglect Technical Assistance and Strategic Dissemination Center (CANTASD). 2018. *Using story mapping to inform child abuse and neglect planning efforts*. Accessed November 30, 2018 from <http://cantasd.org/explore-topics/prevention-planning/our-tomorrows-using-story-mapping/>.



County's HOPE grant is on the Essentials for Childhood Steering Committee] as well as new mechanisms of communication that may develop." While this is the case in Washington it may not apply to all of the states where a state and community are funded. In addition, Nemours has decided to further explore how these types of initiatives might fit together by obtaining funding to allow BMC to work in Florida and Oklahoma neither of which had a community HOPE grantee (additional details are included in Altarum's November 30, 2018 Ripple Effects Report).

**One of the key goals of Nemours HOPE initiative and Project HOPE in general is to add to or accelerate existing work in the state and not create a siloed initiative which presents challenges for identifying the specific contribution HOPE is and should be making.**

In its initial discussions the Florida state team determined that it wanted to focus on addressing issues related to early childhood mental health and developmental screening. The state already had an ECCS grant that was intended to address the same issue. Rather than create a separate project it was decided that the most effective way to advance the HOPE goals was to incorporate them into the ECCS initiative and make the ECCS team the CSSSG for HOPE. The challenge moving forward is determining what HOPE's contribution to ECCS will be. New Jersey has selected as its potential HOPE goal reducing African-American infant mortality because it is a critical early childhood equity issue in the state. The state already has a large grant focused on infant mortality so once again one of the challenges is determining what HOPE will contribute to this effort. New Jersey was interested in the degree to which HOPE could be used as a mechanism to help minimize rather than exacerbate lack of coordination among a multitude of recent federal, state, local and philanthropic initiatives focused on community capacity building around health, race, and equity.



# Preliminary Summary of Lessons Learned for Nemours Project HOPE July 17, 2018

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Altarum has been tracking lessons learned during the planning and initial implementation stage of Nemours' Project Hope. The following is a description of lessons learned as of July 17, 2018. In addition, we include a list of previous accomplishments and challenges that appeared in Altarum's progress report from May 31, 2018. This analysis of lessons learned is based on: observations made throughout the application process and in meetings with Consortium members and others; an examination of documents on the Nemours and Consortium Basecamp sites; and discussions of lessons learned held during Nemours Team meetings.

## States are at very different places in regards to progress on developing comprehensive early childhood systems and addressing inequity in early childhood.

Interviews with states during the application process revealed dramatic differences in state progress building comprehensive early childhood systems that include collaboration across sectors and in addressing inequities. Some of the states that were interviewed had developed collaborative bodies which were focused on early childhood issues. While these entities faced challenges they did represent a venue for collaboration and innovation. Many of the same states that had focused on early childhood system building had also begun to address inequities using innovative approaches. Other states such as Florida and New Jersey have developed far more limited collaborative efforts at the state level.

A few things to note about this lesson:

- States that had developed strong collaborative early childhood bodies faced challenges keeping them strong and developing a strategic approach. Iowa, Kansas, and Oklahoma had faced difficult political and fiscal environments in recent years that required some cuts to activities their early childhood coalitions had undertaken. Washington State was struggling to coordinate its multiple early childhood initiatives and maximize their impact.
- Strong early childhood collaborative entities exist in states with very different political contexts. Iowa, Kansas, and Oklahoma all have strong collaborative, cross-sector entities. While these entities have had to cope with difficult political and fiscal environments over the past few year they have adapted and been able to continue to exert some degree of influence on how early childhood systems operate. Washington State has a strong early childhood collaborative with strong support, but has faced challenges because different priorities from different administrations has led to multiple reorganizations of agencies that address the needs of children and families.
- Much of the work around inequity in the states that have focused on it involved training and assessment efforts. Quite a few of the states had staff who had undergone various kinds of equity, diversity, and inclusion (EDI) training and workshops. The variation in this area presents challenges when determining how an initiative like Project HOPE should approach providing support in this area. It is clear that a one size fits all approach where all states get the same training would not work because it would be redundant for some of the participants. This challenge played an important role in Nemours' decision to not use Common Health Action to provide universal training to all grantees.



Regardless of how much progress they have made, promoting equity and addressing disparities is an area where much remains to be done and where there is great opportunity to support positive change.

A few of the states that were interviewed have undertaken innovative approaches to examining and addressing inequities. Iowa and Kansas in particular had put a strong focus on examining the issue and were working on developing strategies to address the issue. However, all the states that were interviewed made it clear that there was a great deal of work to be done in this area and that they were only in the beginning stages of examining the extent of disparities and coming up with strategies to address it. This was the case in states with strong early childhood collaborative bodies and those without.

Limited work has been done on creating a strong community-state feedback loop.

All the states interviewed during the application process struggled to come up with good examples that showed they had effectively implemented a strong community-state feedback loop that enabled the people affected by policies to have a say in their development and implementation. Iowa and Oklahoma had developed community-based early childhood coalitions with state support, but the level of resources devoted to them had declined in recent years and some of them had effectively ceased to function. A few states mentioned initiatives or grants where they were doing some work in this area, but there was limited evidence of systematic efforts to create sustainable strategies. This lack of progress represents an opportunity and a challenge for Project HOPE.

Raising the profile of what the equity data is telling us will be seen as a big win by at least one of the key advisors to this project

In discussions with Nemours staff, Joan Lombardi cautioned that the limited time available for the project and some of the challenges faced by states means that expectations for how much progress can be made needs to be reined in. She suggested that one area of opportunity that would represent a big win is raising the profile of data that shows the extent of inequities in the states where Project HOPE is working. Doing so could pave the way for future action focused on addressing inequities.

Changes in political context are challenging, even when they are in a direction that should ultimately lead to more opportunities to strengthen early childhood systems

The New Jersey example is an illustration of how a change in political context that is generally seen as creating opportunities for innovation in early childhood can still present challenges for projects like Project HOPE. A new administration often leads to shifts in responsibility and concerns over whether prior commitments should be a priority. This can result in challenges in getting a new project started which can be particularly problematic for short-term projects such as Project HOPE. Given that Florida and Oklahoma both have 2018 gubernatorial elections in which the incumbent is term limited it will be important for the projects in those states to get off to a strong start so they are well-positioned to cope with changes that may result from transitions in administrations.



BUILD and Vital Village are focused on implementing a specific model to assist states and communities. Nemours has designed an approach that is intended to be flexible, meet states where they are, and develop an approach that will help them advance from there.

The three consortium partners are taking varied approaches to supporting their grantees under Project HOPE. The main distinction between Nemours and the BUILD and Vital Villages approaches are that BUILD and Vital Village are testing models that will be very similar across the states and communities where they are working in terms of providing similar does of training and support. Nemours model is intended to be more flexible and involves working directly with states to identify their greatest areas of need and then providing TA focused on those needs. The four states Nemours will be working in have varied experiences and capacity for working on early childhood system issues and addressing inequities. Nemours approach presents opportunities for helping these states diagnose their needs and moving forward from their varied positions.



# Accomplishments and Challenges Summary from April 30 Planning Period Final Report

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## HOPE CONSORTIUM

### Accomplishments

#### APPLICATION PROCESS

**Development of a common application.** Consortium members worked collaboratively to develop a joint letter of intent process for states and communities to apply through a single online application portal. A grant management system, Wize Hive, was utilized to manage application acceptance and collect reviewer feedback. This approach was highly effective in eliciting a large number of responses. A total of 198 applications were submitted from 36 states and the District of Columbia and 139 communities. The common application approach was efficient for states; it eliminated the need for them to submit multiple applications to BMC, BUILD and Nemours and have reviewers assess multiple responses from the same applicants. The application successfully generated responses from both states and communities even though they would more typically respond to separate requests.

**State selection.** HOPE Consortium members focused on supporting states were able to successfully negotiate the process of dividing states in a way that played to each organization's strengths and desires to make new connections. Each state-focused team was allowed to claim a first preference state to consider in the second round, even though the other organization might have been interested in one case and was strongly interested in another. The division played to each organization's strengths. There was an agreement to provide support and council to each other in states where one of the HOPE Consortium members had previously worked, but where the other state was taking the lead. The community-focused member agreed to take into account where state-focused members were working when selecting where they would work.

**Strong focus on community-state connection from the beginning.** Because the initiative brought together organizations focused on supporting states and communities, HOPE Consortium members put a strong focus on how to most effectively build that connection from the beginning of the project. Although the state-focused members had encouraged community connections in previous work, they spent a considerable amount of time thinking about ways they could make these connections in the most meaningful way possible. They also had to navigate discussions of whether and how their approaches could be combined and what some of the challenges would be in that regard.

### Challenges

**Evaluation support from funder.** For much of the planning period, there was a lack of clarity among the HOPE Consortium as to the roles of external evaluators hired by RWJF. There was sometimes inconsistent information provided to HOPE Consortium partners about how to plan for evaluation activities. For example, sample logic models were provided by an external evaluator; however, after modeling the logic model after the sample, the external evaluators admitted the sample logic model did not fit this project well. This caused confusion about how HOPE Consortium partners were to utilize the support from the external evaluators.

Discussions between the funder and its evaluators to define those roles took place separately from the



HOPE Consortium partners, and HOPE Consortium members sometimes felt like information was not being shared in a timely manner and that they were not in position to provide input on the evaluation approach. There was a lack of clarity regarding who would be responsible for evaluating progress in the joint state that had not been resolved when the planning period ended.

**Time.** HOPE Consortium work consumed a great deal of time during the initial stages of the project. A governing process and relationships and a joint application process had to be developed and negotiated. HOPE Consortium members had to navigate working with funder-provided evaluation support (see above). While HOPE Consortium members learned from each other and became aware of strategies they previously had not used (e.g., Nemours discussed the possible benefits of adding a diarist to some of their projects similar to what BUILD was doing) the process of building the Consortium involved a great deal of time and resources. While the collaboration ultimately may be beneficial, it is important for any funder to note that fostering these kinds of collaborations will require an upfront investment in resources devoted to developing the collaboration.

## NEMOURS

### Accomplishments

#### APPLICATION PROCESS

**Encouraging enhanced collaboration in states.** Thirteen of the states that applied had multiple applicants from different agencies or organizations including three states where there were three separate applicants and one state where there was four applicants. Two of the states with multiple applications were selected by Nemours for second round interviews. The states were notified that there were multiple applications and asked to meet before the interviews and discuss whether the applicants could combine their efforts. Kansas, with three applicants, was able to pick a lead organization and develop a common approach. Kansas selected a lead partner who was the only non-governmental entity with all other partners agreeing to have representatives participate in the Phase II interview. In informal conversations with a Nemours' team member, a representative from Child Care Aware Kansas reported that discussions about how to best combine their application had already spurred the development of ideas around how the applicants could collaborate regardless of what happened with the application. Florida's two applicants also settled on an approach for combining their efforts prior to the second round of interviews.

#### NEW PARTNERSHIPS

**EDI partnerships.** In developing strategies to best approach the grant goals, Nemours developed a partnership with CommonHealth Action which will bring Equity, Diversity, and Inclusion (EDI) Training to the states involved in the process. The goal will be to ensure that states put a focus on EDI in all that the work they do. Nemours staff participated in EDI training, increasing their awareness and knowledge of key issues, language, and strategies to address EDI. This will lead to changes in how Nemours conducts future projects with states and communities. Nemours and CommonHealth Action are likely to have opportunities to work together in the future as Nemours continues its work to help states build more effective approaches to health and early learning.