

EARLY CHILDHOOD DEVELOPMENT INITIATIVE INTERIM DEBRIEF

February 2016

INTRODUCTION

Spark Policy Institute was hired to explore and provide evidence for the process and impact of ECDI's Collective Impact work. In August 2015, ECDI underwent a strategic roadmapping process with Spark, outlining key interim outcomes and strategies within the context of collective impact.

To date, ECDI has focused on collective impact activities associated with the Exploring/Developing Phase aimed at establishing the foundation for partnership development and placing supports for data-driven decision-making. ECDI is now transitioning to activities within the Fostering Phase, focused on refining working relationships and implementing continuous improvement processes.

This debrief focuses on the conditions of collective impact and the strategies ECDI identified during that roadmapping process. The information provided below includes high-level findings that can be used to inform learning and support strategy development, as well as guide evaluation activities moving forward.

The evaluation seeks to answer three key questions:

1. To what extent and in what ways has ECDI developed and supported the five conditions of collective impact?
2. To what extent and in what ways has ECDI influenced the actions, capacity and collaboration of partners in ways that can advance the selected early childhood indicators?
3. To what extent and in what ways has ECDI built political and community will on the issue of early childhood?

The information presented in this debrief includes successes and challenges relevant to the conditions of collective impact, as well as participants' insights for how to move the initiative forward.

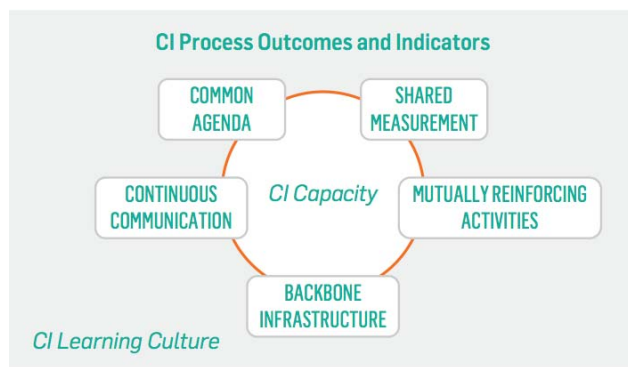
BACKGROUND

The Early Childhood Development Initiative (ECDI) aims to improve the lives of children and families in Monterey County using a collective impact approach.

Spark Policy Institute was hired to explore and provide evidence for the process and impact of ECDI's Collective Impact work. In August 2015, ECDI underwent a strategic roadmapping process with Spark, outlining key interim outcomes and strategies within the context of collective impact (Appendix A). ECDI has also established a Theory of Action (Appendix B) and Plan of Action (Appendix C) focused on differentiating the phases of work within the stages of collective impact. The work of ECDI, as noted in the Plan of Action, is part of an iterative process with fluid stages of change. To date, ECDI has focused on collective impact activities associated with the Exploring/Developing Phase aimed at establishing the foundation for partnership development and placing supports for data-driven decision-making. ECDI is

now transitioning to activities within the Fostering Phase, focused on refining working relationships and implementing continuous improvement processes.

Collective impact is an approach to solving complex social problems that requires cross-sector collaboration and commitment to a common agenda. Collective impact involves establishing the five core conditions (common agenda, mutually reinforcing activities, shared measurement, continuous communication and backbone infrastructure), as well as embracing a culture of continuous learning and building overall capacity to pursue the work. Collective impact initiatives are organized in many different ways. The ECDI



structure follows a loose format typical of collective impact initiatives, which includes an oversight group consisting of cross-sector stakeholders from key organizations and individuals affected by the issue (the Monterey County Children's Council (MCCC)), geographically-centered working groups focused on the initiative's primary strategies (the Community Action Teams (CATs)), the Policy Advocacy Network, and the backbone function responsible for managing and coordinating the initiative (the ECDI Backbone).

This debrief focuses on the conditions of collective impact and the strategies ECDI identified during that roadmapping process. The information provided below includes high-level findings that can be used to inform learning and support strategy development, as well as guide evaluation activities moving forward.

Evaluation Questions

The evaluation seeks to answer three key questions:

1. To what extent and in what ways has ECDI developed and supported the five conditions of collective impact?
2. To what extent and in what ways has ECDI influenced the actions, capacity and collaboration of partners in ways that can advance the selected early childhood indicators?
3. To what extent and in what ways has ECDI built political and community will on the issue of early childhood?

Methods

To begin answering these questions, Spark Policy collected and analyzed data from a variety of sources:

- Collaborative Action Team (CAT) Project Planning & Tracking Sheets
- CAT Action Planning Evaluation Questions
- ECDI Achievement Forms
- Facilitator learning community meeting notes
- Phone interviews with CAT facilitators
- Regular check-ins with Nina Alcaraz, Early Childhood Development Initiative Manager

The information presented in this debrief includes successes and challenges relevant to the conditions of collective impact, as well as participants' insights for how to move the initiative forward. Please note that data sources for this debrief focus on learning from CAT facilitators and the ECDI manager. Future evaluation activities will include stakeholders from the broader initiative, including CAT members, Backbone members, and members of the Monterey County Children's Council (MCCC) members.

EARLY WINS

CAT facilitators and the ECDI Initiative Manager track data through Achievement Forms and CAT Action Plans that provide insights into successes of the initiative. Review of submitted documents and interviews to date elicited several important and interesting early wins. Below are examples from each CAT and the overall ECDI initiative. It's important to note that the CATs and the initiative overall are in the early stages of development focused on process related strategies and outcomes (i.e. engagement and communications structures) that will eventually lead to more systemic outcomes (i.e. policy).

The initiative experienced early wins within each of the CATs and as an initiative as a whole.

- **ECDI:**
 - ECDI was established by the MCCC in September of 2012.
 - In September of 2013 ECDI was specifically called out and received individual status as a Legislative Priority.
 - The Board of Supervisors adopts a resolution declaring 2013 as the “Year of the Child”.
 - In mid-2013 the Board of Supervisors approved augmentation to the Health Department budget to support ECDI in the amount of \$300,000 to support the increase financial support of the collective impact effort.
 - MCCC approved the strategic work plan for ECDI, including geographic priorities and indicators.
 - Hired ECDI Manager in early 2014.
 - Created structures and frameworks to guide the initiative and CATs, including values statement, Policy Advocacy Network goals and an action planning template.
 - Hired facilitators for each CAT and invested in a facilitator learning community to encourage cross-CAT learning and collaboration.
 - Brought on Communications Consultant, Spoke Consulting, to strengthen communication and an external evaluator, Spark Policy Institute, to demonstrate progress.
- **Greenfield:** Built relationships with key partners, including the Greenfield Unified School District (GUSD) and City leadership. GUSD hosted a Data/Impact Management Orientation so CAT members could learn about existing data/approaches relevant to early learning.
- **North County:** Focused on a Cradle to Career Network strategy. The North Monterey County Alliance, led by the North Monterey County School District (NMCSD) conducted asset mapping activities with various stakeholder groups to identify strengths and gaps for early childhood. Currently the North Monterey County Community Alliance (NMCCA) is in transition from a network of stakeholders to an impact alliance that includes orientation of almost 50% new key members.
- **Pajaro:** Utilized a Theory of Change framework to lead the Pajaro CAT from their vision of Early Literacy to key, desired changes (preconditions) that would illustrate they are moving towards their vision. These “changes” or outcomes were then incorporated into their solution tree. Parents within the community participated in selecting the ECDI focus area and the CAT has incorporated service providers from the neighboring county, Santa Cruz, that also see Pajaro residents.
- **Salinas:** Through effective engagement strategies, the Community Alliance for Safety and Peace has taken on a sustainable leadership role as an anchor organization within the community.

Participation in ECDI has broadened and strengthened relationships between Salinas organizations including Building Healthy Communities, the two largest school districts, Alisal Unified School District and the Salinas City Elementary School District.

- **Seaside/Peninsula**: Through the use of the Engagement Opportunity Request, stakeholders across multiple sectors signed on in support of ECDI and prioritized ECDI indicators. Monterey Peninsula Unified School District has come to the table and expanded their internal early learning collaborative to work with community members focused on early childhood development.

SUMMARY OF KEY FINDINGS

- ***CAT facilitators appreciate the ECDI supports*** they have received and feel they have benefitted the communities with which they work. Key supports include an accessible ECDI manager, hired facilitators, the facilitator learning community, materials and resources that guide and align community action plans with a common agenda, and strategic partnerships.
- ***CAT facilitators recognize Backbone and MCCC members as having valuable knowledge, resources, and networks*** that could greatly benefit the work of ECDI. However, CAT facilitators and community members feel disconnected from the MCCC and Backbone and would like ***improved communication channels and interaction*** that allow them to leverage the expertise to move their work forward at the community level.

CAT facilitators and community members feel disconnected from the MCCC and Backbone and would like improved communication channels and interaction.

Many CATs are on the cusp or transitioning from planning to implementation, which will require additional support and internal structures.

- ***CATs have made significant progress in laying the foundational community work for future action***, including strategic action planning and partnership development. Many are on the cusp of transitioning from planning to implementation, which will require additional support and internal structures.
- ***Certain emergent strategies*** have helped facilitate the work in certain CATs and may help inform the overall ECDI structure moving forward. These include the development of ***“anchor organizations”*** that step up as local leaders and help facilitate on-the-ground work; and ***“core leadership teams”*** that include a subset of committed stakeholders and help keep the CAT work moving forward.
- ***CATs vary in their stages of development*** and have experienced diverse successes and challenges. There is interest among the CAT leaders to engage in peer learning opportunities to share and learn from each other.
- CATs continually struggle with ***broadening and deepening stakeholder engagement at all levels***, whether it's recruiting new and diverse partners or re-engaging/maintaining existing stakeholders. CATs are eager for support in strategizing effective communication techniques for recruitment and engagement, as well as implementing continuous communication between meetings in ways that keep partners engaged.
- ECDI has recently transitioned to an ***open participation policy***, which will allow more communities to participate in the initiative as CATs. There is a need to refine processes,

CATs continually struggle with broadening and deepening stakeholder engagement at all levels.

communication channels, and internal infrastructure to ensure that expansion is successful and sustainable.

FINDINGS

Common Vision

All participants share a vision for change that includes a common understanding of the problem and a joint approach to solving the problem through agreed-upon action.

Monterey County Children's Council Vision: All children in Monterey County live in safe, nurturing homes and communities; they are healthy, valued, succeed in school and realize their full potential.

Early Childhood Development Initiative Mission: ECDI aims to maximize community efforts to improve early childhood development outcomes through effective coordination, capacity building, empowerment and strategic action for children and their families from the prenatal stage through 3rd grade. The ECDI supports county-wide advocates and local communities through technical assistance such as, meeting facilitation, data analysis, communication and advocacy.

Community participates in shaping the common agenda

The MCCC Vision and the ECDI Mission are revisited at CAT meetings as well as facilitator learning community meetings and used as a reference point to guide the overall vision for the work of the initiative.

CATs have a good understanding of the problem and are united on overall mission and vision of the initiative.

Generally, CATs have a good understanding of the problem and are united on overall mission and vision of the initiative. Additionally, in an effort to help CATs move forward with aligning activities, a set of ECDI guiding principles was created in addition to existing MCCC guiding principles (Appendix D). CATs have invested a significant amount of time in upfront planning and community organizing to align with a common agenda. Some have seen significant growth in understanding the collective impact approach and

building consensus around strategies and long-term goals within the larger ECDI vision. Many are beginning to transition to more concrete action planning to move their goals forward. However, an interesting challenge to implementing a common agenda was noted: Although a more intertwined working relationship with existing county initiatives might create benefit from a strong foundational stakeholder base and additional resources, it can also create additional steps or require more time to get everyone on the same page and working toward a common agenda.

Although a more intertwined working relationship with existing county initiatives might create benefit from a strong foundational stakeholder base and additional resources, it can also create additional steps or require more time to get everyone on the same page and working toward a common agenda.

Mutually Reinforcing Activities

A diverse set of stakeholders, typically across sectors, coordinate a set of differentiated activities through a mutually reinforcing plan of action.

CATs plan and undertake action in their communities

In alignment with the exploring/developing phase of the ECDI Plan of Action (Appendix C), all CATs have begun to develop regional action plans. While each community is at a different stage of development, CATs have collectively engaged in a variety of activities to help develop action plans at the community level, including populating the ECDI 180-day Action Plan template, identifying common ECDI indicators to focus on, root cause analysis, asset-mapping, utilizing a theory of change framework and developing a pilot project impact plan. As CATs are transitioning from planning to implementation, they are beginning to engage in tangible activities, including targeted stakeholder recruitment, a community listening campaign, and a pilot project for data-driven cross-sector collaboration. Though all CATs have made significant progress, one key challenge related to strategic action planning for all CATs was identified:

- **Limited stakeholder engagement:** CATs expressed concerns that the indicators were selected and action plans were shaped by a small group of stakeholders, leading to an agenda that may not

CATs expressed concerns that the indicators were selected and action plans were shaped by a small group of stakeholders, leading to an agenda that may not accurately represent or reflect the interests of the broader community.

accurately represent or reflect the interests of the broader community. The specific reasons for limited stakeholder engagement varied across CATs, but included lag time between the kickoff meeting and follow up meetings, lack of continuous communication and actionable items between meetings, frustration with emphasis on planning processes, and meeting fatigue across a variety of community initiatives. Additionally, in some cases, participant turnover made it difficult to solidify action and keep everyone on the same page around greater collective impact. CATs have used a variety of

tools to identify additional stakeholders that need to be at the table, including stakeholder matrices and asset mapping exercises, as well as holding stakeholder luncheons.



Suggestions for improvement:

Stakeholder retention – Addressing meeting fatigue: Many community stakeholders are involved in overlapping initiatives with numerous meetings and emails, which can lead to “meeting fatigue.” Several ideas for addressing this issue arose, including:

- Creating actionable agendas that engage stakeholders in ways that leverage their skills and recognize their value;
- Matching agenda items to attendees to ensure that the stakeholders who come to meetings are the appropriate voices given the agenda items;
- Improving two-way communication and feedback loops between meetings such that people who miss meetings can be kept in the loop and have opportunities to give input (i.e. virtual communication platforms, etc.);
- Action-oriented meeting notes that capture action items, key decisions, timelines, and responsibilities;
- Targeting communication to stakeholder level of involvement and time commitment (i.e. some CATs are already beginning to use tools that help determine which stakeholders would like to be involved at what engagement level).

Stakeholder recruitment – Targeted outreach: Effective outreach and recruitment must consider the diversity of stakeholders. For example, fliers and word-of-mouth may work better for parents and families, suggesting that email blasts and other electronic communications from ECDI may not be reaching these critical constituents. CATs have used tools and methods (i.e. stakeholder matrix, asset-mapping, wheel activity, etc.) to re-engage previous stakeholders and/or bring new stakeholders to the table. Most CATs are constantly struggling with recruiting participants, especially nontraditional partners such as businesses and would benefit from additional support to increase participation.

CATs identify opportunities and barriers to improving early childhood for policy agenda & CATs develop advocacy agenda for EC and train partners to take action

CATs are interested in engaging with policymakers and other decision-makers in ways that can impact the policy agenda for early childhood. The Policy Advocacy Network (the Network) was one promising opportunity for CATs to engage in policy. While some CAT members attended a few Policy Advocacy

CATs are interested in engaging with policymakers and other decision-makers in ways that can impact the policy agenda for early childhood.

While some CAT members attended a few Policy Advocacy Network meetings initially, they did not find that the meetings engaged them in actionable ways.

Network meetings initially, they did not find that meetings engaged them in actionable ways, perhaps because it was in the early stages of development. While the Network activities are currently placed on hold due to staffing shortages, ECDI has submitted an application to the Women's Foundation of California for an exciting opportunity that will allow local Backbone and CAT members to participate in civic

engagement and advocacy leadership training. The training will end with participants collectively drafting a county level policy, giving ECDI partners the opportunity to work together toward a tangible and meaningful goal.

Shared Measurement

All participating organizations agree on the ways success will be measured and reported. A short list of common indicators is identified and used for learning and improvement.

ECDI develops a shared measurement system:

Through a collaborative process, ECDI identified and selected six countywide indicators to use as common indicators for the initiative, including 1) third grade children who read at 3rd grade reading levels, 2) parents reading to children, 3) children who demonstrate social and emotional readiness for Kindergarten, 4) available licensed childcare places, 5) maternal education levels, and 6) mothers receiving prenatal care. Initially, each of the CATs chose 1-3 indicators on which to focus. However, the extent to which CATs have remained focused on initially selected indicators varies across CATs. A few key challenges were identified:

- *Stakeholder engagement:* As mentioned above, one key challenge identified relates to stakeholder engagement. Specifically, the combination of too much lag time between meetings and changes in the composition of participating stakeholders can contribute to shifts in CAT focus. In some cases, this challenge impacts which indicator the CAT would like to focus on overall; in others, it

The combination of too much lag time between meetings and changes in the composition of participating stakeholders can contribute to shifts in CAT focus.

impacts whether the CAT will take an integrated, simultaneous but separate, or sequential approach to the indicators selected.

- **Indicator definition:** Although great effort was put into selecting key indicators, there is still some disagreement among stakeholders and confusion related to multiple initiatives, as to which indicators to focus on and how to measure them. For example, according to some English Language Learner (ELL) experts at the community level, it is more accurate to use 5th grade as the benchmark for 3rd grade reading level among students whose first language is not English. Similarly, the indicators and measurement approaches selected for ECDI may not align with those chosen by other initiatives in the county (i.e. Bright Futures), indicating a potential need to clarify the indicator definitions and measurement approaches for various initiatives, including ECDI.

Cross-CAT 6-indicator data is monitored and used to adapt strategies as needed

Some CATs have had more success moving forward on selected indicators and have begun establishing local partnerships that focus on data sharing and building a learning culture. CATs transitioning to the next stage of shared measurement identified a new set of challenges related to logistics around data sharing at the local level:

- **Measurement Tools:** While partners may come to an agreement about which indicators to focus on, the exact definition and ways in which the data is collected can vary. For example, a movement for standardized Kindergarten Readiness Assessment (KRA) is taking place at the county and state levels. However, some schools have not been collecting KRA data in the same way that ECDI is defining it, requiring additional discussions and troubleshooting on effective ways to adapt data collection instruments that meet the needs of the local institutions as well as the larger early childhood community.

Some schools have not been collecting KRA data in the same way
- **Local capacity and infrastructure:** Community partners, including schools, have limited human resources and technology to collect, manage, and analyze data. This includes staff knowledge, skills, and time, as well as resources, software, and tools. Additionally, local school districts and other partners use different information systems that make shared measurement time consuming and burdensome for under-resourced partners.

Community partners, including schools, have limited human resources and technology to collect, manage, and analyze data.
- **Data sharing can be sensitive:** Even when initiating conversations and planning processes around sharing data, tensions can arise. Sharing data, especially sensitive information, can create tension between partners due to increased focus on quality and organizational structures. As organizations begin to establish partnerships around sharing data, unforeseen issues can arise, especially when it comes to the impact it has on the staff roles, responsibilities, and workload.

Sharing data, especially sensitive information, can create tension between partners due to increased focus on quality and organizational structures.



Suggestions for improvement:

Clarifying processes for collaboration around data sharing: As collaboration around key indicators and data collection methods advances, there is a need to establish processes and protocols that

facilitate effective collaboration based on lessons learned and existing best practices. This may include key questions to address during specific developmental stages, suggestions for laying the foundational work in relationship-building, organizational dynamics related to sharing data, and available resources and supports (i.e. examples/templates of FERPA-compliant MOUs/MOAs for data sharing, etc.).

Identify and address gaps in local capacity: Partners at the local level vary in experience with and capacity for data collection, highlighting the need to assess community strengths and gaps (i.e. SWOT analysis) and identify resources, supports, and processes to improve effective collaboration around shared measurement.

Invest in collaborative information technology systems: To support the development of an initiative-wide shared measurement system, consider investing in information technology systems that allow seamless data sharing between diverse data platforms. For example, software intermediaries that allow programs to share data without changing individual organizations' systems (i.e. iResults.com).

Continuous Communication

All players engage in frequent and structured open communication to assure mutual objectives and create common motivation.

Through established communications channels, CATs inform Backbone, Policy Advocacy Network & MCCC of on-the-ground activities

Communication channels were explored on several levels, including within CATs, between CATs, within ECDI, and between ECDI and other initiatives. The findings reveal strengths, as well as opportunities to strengthen communication in a way that will contribute to building a learning culture.

- *Within CATs:* Communication within CATs varies and is largely dependent on the leadership structure. For example, in some cases, community leaders take responsibility for coordinating outreach; in other cases, facilitators play a larger role in communicating meeting details. Regardless of the structure, a common theme that CATs identified was improving communication between meetings. Often, CAT facilitators felt that lag time and lack of continuous communication channels between meetings led to decreased stakeholder motivation and participation.

Lag time and lack of continuous communication channels between meetings led to decreased stakeholder motivation and participation.

- *Between CATs:* The majority of communication between CATs happens at the facilitator level through facilitator learning community meetings. These meetings are highly valued by facilitators because they provide the opportunity for facilitators to interact, learn from each other, and leverage resources. In addition, a common theme was the need for more direct interaction and opportunities for learning between CAT members, including formal facilitated dialogue as well as informal networking opportunities.
- *Within ECDI:* Currently, the primary communication channel between the CATs and the Backbone, the Policy Advocacy Network and MCCC is through the ECDI manager. CAT facilitators have

The facilitator learning community meetings are highly valued by facilitators because they provide the opportunity for facilitators to interact, learn from each other, and leverage resources.

regular check-ins and facilitator learning community meetings with the ECDI manager, where community level information is shared with the manager and initiative level information is shared with the CAT facilitators. The manager reports back to the Backbone and MCCC about on-the-ground activities and CAT facilitators share updates back to the CATs. This flow of information allows the manager to have intimate knowledge about community level work and is a valuable communication point for the initiative structure. However, the initiative may benefit from creating a more distributed model of communication and information sharing. A communication structure that includes more than one primary contact can help ensure one position doesn't become the only hub of information, minimizing the risk of a breakdown or gap in communication if one individual leaves, and providing increased opportunities for learning, sharing, and advising. For example, lack of direct interface with Backbone and MCCC members causes a disconnection between CATs and the larger initiative, potentially leading to missed opportunities for leveraging collective resources.

The initiative may benefit from creating a more distributed model of communication and information sharing.

- *Between ECDI and other initiatives:* There has been considerable interaction between ECDI and other county initiatives in terms of initial planning, sharing resources, and keeping informed about general happenings. For example, Bright Futures, the Monterey County Office of Education (MCOE) and ECDI have had meetings to discuss focus areas and how they can work together; and one of the CATs exists within the North Monterey County Alliance (which is a Cradle to Career Initiative). Additionally, many stakeholders sit on committees and attend meetings across the various initiatives. However, many community members are unaware of how the initiatives fit together and there is some evidence to suggest community members are wary of personally investing in initiatives they perceive as uncoordinated, having additional concerns that the initiative will disappear when funding is no longer available. Additionally, as initiatives become more intertwined at the community level (e.g. the North County CAT is part of the larger North Monterey County Community Alliance, which is a Cradle to Career initiative), there is a need to refine structures and processes in a way that facilitates action.

Many community members are unaware of how the initiatives fit together and there is some evidence to suggest community members are wary of personally investing in initiatives they perceive as uncoordinated.

S

Suggestions for Improvement

Improved communication channels and feedback loops: Communication channels could be improved at all levels of the initiative, including within CATs, between CATs, within ECDI, and between ECDI and other initiatives. Specifically, creating a more formal structure that allows for a two-way flow of information between CATs, as well as between CATs and the MCCC and Backbone.

Improved communication platforms: Busy stakeholders can't always attend in-person meetings; which interferes with their ability to stay informed and contribute in meaningful ways. Rather than relying solely on email and face-to-face meetings, consider using communication platforms or strategies that allow for readily available on-demand information or virtual participation (i.e. Wiki page, pod-casts, actionable meeting notes, webinars, etc.).

Targeted and streamlined information sharing: At all levels, there are diverse stakeholders with varied interests, time, and capacity for engagement. Developing a process or accessing communication

tools that help identify which stakeholders need to know certain information can help to streamline communication, reduce information overload, and increase meaningful engagement.

Increased collaboration between county initiatives: As ECDI and other initiatives work to transition their partnership from coordination to deeper collaboration, there is a need to further define structures and processes at all levels; as well as communicate these processes and structures to communities.

Backbone Infrastructure

An independent, funded staff dedicated to the initiative provides ongoing support guiding the initiative's vision and strategy, supporting aligned activities, establishing shared measurement, building public will, advancing policy, and mobilizing resources.

The ECDI Backbone has provided a variety of supports to facilitate the work of the initiative. Participants identified several key supports, including:

Social Capital Resources:

- *CAT Facilitators:* The hired facilitators help to organize and guide community work, as well build capacity at the community level. Facilitators keep the work going between meetings and ensure alignment with the larger initiative. This is a particularly valuable resource since already busy community members are participating on a volunteer basis. Two key themes emerged around this support, including the importance for CAT facilitators to have clearly defined roles (i.e. the extent to which they operate in a facilitating role vs. programmatic roles); and the importance of having a sustainability plan to build capacity and transition facilitator responsibilities to community members.
- *The ECDI Manager:* Having an accessible ECDI Manager to help coordinate activities, attend meetings, act as a thought partner, and bridge communication between the CATs, the MCCC, and the Backbone is an extremely valuable support. The position allows for continuous flow of information among CAT Facilitators and between CATs and the MCCC and Backbone. As mentioned above, it will be important to diversify communication channels as the initiative continues to grow.
- *The Backbone:* The backbone is composed of members across multiple agencies and organizations, which allows for a broader set of perspectives when decisions are being made and actions are being carried out. The backbone members also commit a significant amount of time to the initiative, which includes attending backbone meetings, attending ad hoc or subgroup meetings as needed, reviewing documents and initiative materials, and attending other meetings across the county as a representative of the backbone.
- *NEW: Communications Consultant:* The impact of the hired communications consultant is yet to be determined. However, participants have high hopes for this position, indicating the importance for having an individual dedicated to improving both internal and external communication.

The CAT facilitators are a particularly valuable resource since already busy community members are participating on a volunteer basis.

Infrastructure:

- *The facilitator learning community:* The facilitator learning community allows facilitators to build relationships, learn from each other and share resources. It is a highly valued support that contributes to building a learning culture and increasing collective impact capacity.

- *Open participation policy:* ECDI has recently transitioned to an open participation policy for new communities to join the initiative. The city of Gonzales has expressed interest in signing on to become an official CAT, showing that communities see value in partnering with ECDI and are making the commitment to bringing their own resources to the table (e.g. Gonzales has funding for their own facilitator). If the partnership moves forward, this development will broaden ECDI's reach and impact across the county. It will be important to refine infrastructure and processes for onboarding new communities so that they have a clear understanding of the ECDI vision, feel supported by ECDI and value being an official CAT.

Outreach and Partnerships:

- *Strategic partnerships:* The Backbone has helped to develop some key partnerships for the initiative. In addition to working with the other county initiatives and the Monterey County Office of Education, ECDI has established relationships with organizations that will help provide additional training and resources. For example, the ECDI manager is forming a partnership with the Women's Foundation of California to support civic engagement and advocacy leadership for CAT members; Re(a)d Zone and First Book will provide free bilingual books to the ECDI CATs; and the Media Coalition secured a grant, from the Giannini Foundation for \$150k for the implementation of the ECDI media campaign (which involved several critical partners including the Literacy Campaign for Monterey County, Monterey County Gang Violence Prevention Initiative, and First 5 Monterey County).

The Backbone has helped to develop some key partnerships for the initiative.

Tools and Resource Materials:

- **Tools and Resources:** The Backbone has provided key materials to maintain a common agenda and guide CAT action plans, including the ECDI framework, the six common indicators, the 180-day Action Plan, the ECDI guiding principles, etc. This support helps CAT facilitators and CATs to stay grounded in the common ECDI agenda and develop plans to implement mutually reinforcing activities.

Participants also identified additional ways the Backbone could help facilitate their work. These are included in the table below.



Suggestions for Improvement

Laying foundational groundwork at the community level: The ECDI backbone and MCCC were heavily invested in the upfront planning of the initiative (e.g. bringing stakeholders together to identify common indicators). There is a need to continue efforts at laying this type of foundational work at the community level.

- Refine process for supporting initial foundational work at the community level, including investing in relationship building with executive leadership. This is especially important as ECDI expands to new communities.

Increased opportunities to leverage expertise: The MCCC and Backbone members have considerable expertise and connections around early childhood development. CATs would like increased interaction that allows for CATs to leverage the knowledge, networks, and resources of Backbone and MCCC members.

- Provide opportunities for CATs to access MCCC and Backbone members to leverage their expertise and professional networks. For example, by attending CAT meetings, providing

contact lists, making introductions to key partners, or providing advice that support CATs in building and maintaining membership.

Onboarding new members: As new members and new communities join the initiative, there is a need for creating an onboarding process and materials.

- Support in creating onboarding kits for people and communities new to the initiative that include video, print, and e-materials that are updated regularly and easily accessible to a variety of stakeholders.
- Consider developing and implementing a collective impact leadership assessment in interested communities/CATs to better understand readiness and which supports may be needed in a particular area.

Actionable Next Steps & Opportunities for Growth

The table in Appendix E contains opportunities for growth and ideas for improvement that were identified through document reviews and conversations with CAT facilitators and the ECDI manager and noted throughout this report. The points to consider were drafted through a collaborative process between Spark Policy and the ECDI evaluation subcommittee.

CONCLUSION

This report provides an overview of initial evaluation findings for ECDI, including successes to date and opportunities for improvements moving forward. Evaluation activities will continue with the implementation of the initiative, including: a February in-person debrief with ECDI stakeholders to process through key findings and develop actionable next steps; a midyear survey to gather insight from all ECDI stakeholders including MCCC members, Backbone members, CAT facilitators and CAT community members; and virtual debriefs to process through survey findings with each ECDI stakeholder group.

APPENDIX A

Strategic Roadmap: Early Childhood Development Initiative 9.28.15

Collective Impact	Strategies	Interim Outcomes	Systems Outcomes	Long Term Outcomes	Vision
<p>Common vision: Participants share a vision for change, a common understanding of the problem, a joint approach to solving the problem.</p> <p>Mutually Reinforcing Activities: Diverse set of stakeholders, across sectors, coordinate activities through a mutually reinforcing plan.</p> <p>Continuous Communication: Participants engage in frequent and structured open communication to trust, assure mutual objectives, and create common motivation.</p> <p>Shared Measurement: Participating organizations agree on how success will be measured/reported, with a list of common indicators identified and used for learning and improvement.</p> <p>Learning Culture: Participants contribute to an environment dedicated to learning from what has worked and what hasn't, through support, trust and respect.</p> <p>Collective Impact Capacity: Initiative has the skills, talents & resources necessary to support moving forward the vision and mission.</p> <p>Backbone/Infrastructure Support: An independent, funded staff dedicated to the initiative, ongoing support guiding the initiative's vision & strategy, supporting aligned activities, establishing shared measurement, building public will, advancing policy, and mobilizing resources.</p>	<p>Strategies to Support Common Vision, Mutually Reinforcing Activities & Continuous Communications</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> Community participate in shaping the common agenda Through established communications channels, CATs inform Backbone, PAC & EC of on-the-ground activities CATs plan and undertake action in their communities CATs identify opportunities and barriers to improving early childhood for policy agenda <p>Shared Measurement & Learning Culture:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> Develop shared measurement system Cross- CAT 6-Indicator data is monitored and used to adapt strategies as needed Process indicators are monitored and used to adapt strategies as needed. Use evaluation results to inform decision making <p>Development and Policy Strategies to Support Reinforcing Activities, Continuous Communications, Learning Culture & CI Capacity</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> Engage other initiatives in the area doing relevant work Engage new, diverse funders in supporting EC Share best practices and evidence including ROI and other community support Engage non-traditional partners and sectors to gain commitment Develop advocacy agenda for EC and train partners to take action Launch media campaign 	<p>Community Level Outcomes</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> CATs build community awareness and support for their work CATs successfully influence the alignment of financial and community resources to improve community level outcomes CATs support continuous improvement through data sharing on the prioritized indicators Emerging leaders have the capacity and support from ECDI to lead the CAT work <p>Expanded Partnerships</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> Diverse and non-traditional partners engage with ECDI Partners strategically (re)allocate resources to support EC in alignment with the shared vision Initiatives work conjointly and support CI model <p>Political and Community Will and Action</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> Policymakers, funders, service providers, educators, community leaders and diverse and non-traditional partners: <ul style="list-style-type: none"> Increase awareness and dialogue about the value of EC to the community, economy and society Identify EC as a priority issue Recognize inequities in the community related to EC Recognize their role in contributing to progress on EC Become champions, taking action on EC issues Support a long-term prevention model that begins in EC Community members and parents are advocates for their children's education 	<p>Communities are implementing systems change</p> <p>Early childhood systems and policies meet the needs of children and families</p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Increase in children who read at 3rd grade reading levels Increase in parents reading to children Increase in children who demonstrate social and emotional readiness for Kindergarten Increase in available licensed childcare places Increase in maternal education levels Increase in mothers receiving prenatal care 	<p>All children are healthy, valued, successful in school and realizing their full potential.</p>

APPENDIX B

ECDI THEORY OF ACTION

The Collective Impact framework allows ECDI to implement a proven road map for the Initiative. Based on lessons from the StriveTogether Cradle to Career Network and FSG, ECDI has developed a Theory of Action that offers quality benchmarks that differentiate the phases of the work within the five stages of Collective Impact. The Theory of Action helps distinguish when the work transitions from traditional collaboration to sustainable, effective partnerships. It includes the 5 core elements of Collective Impact as well as 2 cross cutting elements that support the work of each of the core elements.

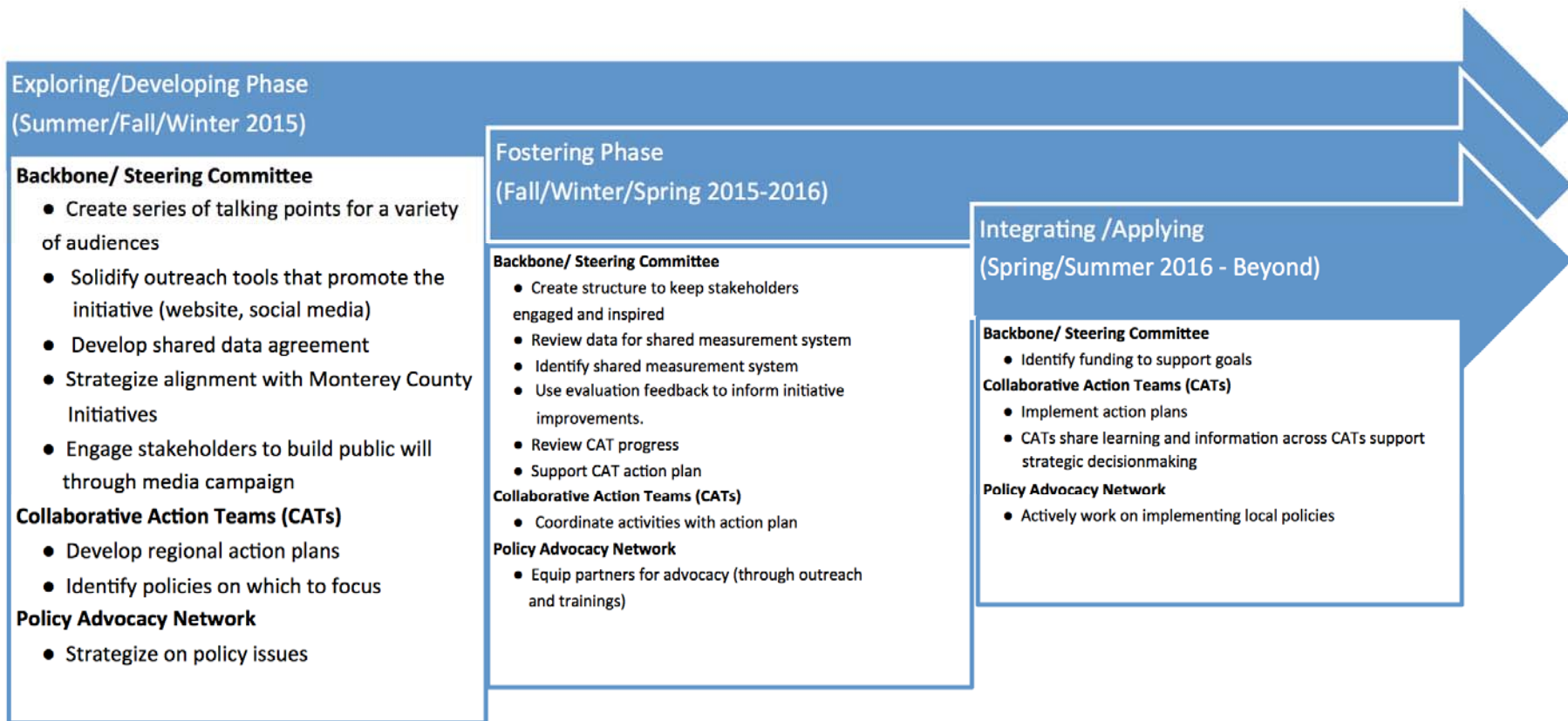
	Exploring	Developing	Fostering	Integrating	Applying
<p><u>Common Vision:</u> All participants share a vision for change that includes a common understanding of the problem and a joint approach to solving the problem through agreed-upon action.</p>	Work on the beginning aspects of formulating a partnership.	Focus on accessing and collecting data and putting in place the supports necessary for data-driven decision making.	Focus on using data in a continuous improvement process to identify improvements and interventions to impact an outcome.	Focus on navigating the necessary evolutions, transitions, and continuous improvement a partnership goes through to improve outcomes.	See real impact as evident through improvement in the community level outcomes and indicators.
<p><u>Mutually Reinforcing Activities</u> A diverse set of stakeholders, typically across sectors, coordinate a set of differentiated activities through a mutually reinforcing plan of action.</p>					
<p><u>Shared Measurement</u> All participating organizations agree on the ways success will be measured and reported. A short list of common indicators is identified and used for learning and improvement.</p>					
<p><u>Continuous Communication</u> All players engage in frequent and structured open communication to assure mutual objectives and create common motivation.</p>					
<p><u>Backbone Support</u> An independent, funded staff dedicated to the initiative provides ongoing support guiding the initiative's vision and strategy, supporting aligned activities, establishing shared measurement building public will, advancing policy, and mobilizing resources.</p>					
<p><u>Learning Culture*</u> All participants contribute to an environment dedicated to learning from what has worked and what hasn't worked through support, trust and respect.</p>					
<p><u>Collective Impact Capacity*</u> The Initiative builds the skills, talents and resources necessary to support moving forward with the vision and mission.</p>					

APPENDIX C

ECDI PLAN OF ACTION

The ECDI Plan of Action will be implemented in phases based on the Theory of Action. Below is the plan for the overall initiative. Each of the Collaborative Action Teams will also create more detailed action plans. With the understanding that the work of ECDI is part of an iterative process, the following phases are not meant to be contingent on one another but provide a guide for each Collective Impact element. For instance, a community may be in the Developing phase for Common Vision, but in the Exploring phase for Joint Measurement. This is to be expected due to the fluid nature of the work.

ECDI has provided a template of an action plan for each of the five supported CATs to complete. The first version of this action plan will be completed by December 2015 and revisited approximately every six months to guide the work. Both the Initiative and the CATs are in the Exploring and Developing phases. The information below illustrates the anticipated outcomes through Summer 2016.



APPENDIX D



GUIDING PRINCIPLES

As the Collaborative Action Teams are moving forward to align activities, a need to set guiding principles has emerged. The Backbone has crafted language specific to early childhood to ensure that ECDI strategies and activities are in line with current research.

MCCC GUIDING PRINCIPLES

- **Collaborative** – promoting cross-agency policies and procedures that enhance seamless service delivery; encourage interdisciplinary problem-solving and support; and address the barriers to success;
- **Comprehensive, Coordinated and Integrated** – recommending a full array of services and supports where the entire range of needs are addressed in an efficient, responsive and effective manner;
- **Family Centered and Family Driven** – honoring, respecting and empowering families as their child’s first teacher and strongest advocate;
- **Culturally Responsive** – ensuring diverse populations receive culturally responsive services and supports;
- **Community-Based/Community Driven** – ensuring that services are available and accessible in a variety of settings and locations;
- **Participatory** – ensuring that program recipients participate in making and shaping decisions.
- **Outcomes-Oriented** – measuring outcomes for children, youth and families and using data to facilitate decision-making, identify obstacles and improve services.

ECDI GUIDING PRINCIPLES – EARLY CHILDHOOD

The Early Childhood Development Initiative will use a collective impact approach to support, develop and initiate early childhood strategies and activities that embrace the following principles based on current research. Projects will embrace best and emerging practices within the context of community wisdom. ECDI, including the Collaborative Action Teams and Policy Advocacy Network, is guided by the following shared understandings when working:

Principle	Current Research Findings	Project Approaches
Children are born capable, ready and eager to learn.	From birth a healthy child is an active participant in their growth – actively providing opportunities to for them to construct ideas and theories about how things work.	Projects will support children as active participants in their growth.
The first years of a child’s life are a period of extraordinary growth	Children’s brain development in the first five years of their life significantly influences their ability to learn over their lifetime.	Projects will focus on working with young children and their families at an early age.
Experiences and relationships matter.	Learning happens in a social context. The quality of relationships that children experience will impact how a child develops and what they learn.	Projects will support quality relationships between children and the adults who care for them, as well as with their peers.
Emotional and cognitive developments are interrelated. How children feel affects how they learn.	The development of intelligence, language, emotions and social skills is highly inter-related. How children feel can affect how they learn.	Projects will enhance and support emotional and social development as the foundation for the development of cognitive skills.

Parents and Caregivers are the child's "first teachers"	Building on caregiver skills and strengths enhances their capacity to create opportunities for learning	Projects will build on caregiver skills and strengths.
Early language and literacy (reading and writing) development begin at the start of life.	Strong literacy skills in later years are best accomplished by exposing children to activities that are integrated across different, but inter-connected literacy activities.	Projects supporting early literacy and language will engage children in all forms of communication: listening, speaking, singing, reading, drawing, and writing, in the context of strong relationships.
Quality early care is critical to early learning and school readiness and success.	High quality early care has a long lasting effect on children's capacity to learn and long-term academic achievement.	Projects will support opportunities for high quality early care and learning.
Early intervention with children with special needs better supports them in building their abilities.	Early intervention with children can serve as a cushion against the multiple adverse influences that may hinder their developmental progress.	Projects will support early interventions for children with developmental concerns and/or adverse influences.
Safe and interesting places to explore and play build children's curiosity, learning and physical development.	Children strive to make sense of the world they live in. An environment can maximize a child's intellectual potential and provides a foundation for the development of emotional security.	Projects will support opportunities for play and exploration for our youngest children.

APPENDIX E

Opportunities for Growth	Ideas for Improvement	Points to Consider
Common Vision		
<p><i>Partnering with existing county initiatives:</i> CATs working closely with other initiatives at the community level have the benefit of a strong foundational stakeholder base and additional resources. However, it may take more time or additional steps to ensure everyone agrees and is working toward a common agenda.</p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • None explicitly identified. 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • What structures need to be in place for ECDI to bring people together around a common agenda? • What additional supports or strategies are needed to collaborate with existing initiatives around a common agenda?
Mutually Reinforcing Activities		
<p><i>Stakeholder retention – Addressing meeting fatigue:</i> Many community stakeholders are involved in overlapping initiatives with numerous meetings and emails, which can lead to “meeting fatigue.”</p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Creating actionable agendas that engage stakeholders in ways that leverage their skills and recognize their value; • Matching agenda items to attendees to ensure that the stakeholders who come to meetings are the appropriate voices given the agenda items; • Improving two-way communication and feedback loops between meetings such that people who miss meetings can be kept in the loop and have opportunities to give input (i.e. virtual communication platforms, etc.); • Action-oriented meeting notes that capture action items, key decisions, timelines, and responsibilities; • Identifying actions that can be taken between meetings to ensure that work continues outside of standard meetings. • Targeting communication to stakeholder level of involvement and 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • How can ECDI use the diverse experiences across CATs as a learning opportunity? How can that learning be integrated into the ECDI infrastructure? • How can CATs leverage the expertise of the MCCC and the Backbone throughout the policy development process?

	time commitment (i.e. some CATs are already beginning to use tools that help determine which stakeholders would like to be involved at what engagement level).	
<i>Stakeholder recruitment – Targeted outreach:</i> Most CATs are constantly struggling with recruiting participants, including parents and families as well as nontraditional partners such as businesses.	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Additional support for engaging in effective outreach and recruitment that considers the diversity of stakeholders. For example, fliers and word-of-mouth may work better for parents and families, suggesting that email blasts and other electronic communications from ECDI may not be reaching these critical constituents. Utilize tools and methods • Opportunities to leverage MCCC and Backbone member networks, connections, and contacts to build participation at the community level. 	
Shared Measurement		
<i>Clarifying processes for collaboration around data sharing:</i> As collaboration around key indicators and data collection methods advances, there is a need to establish processes and protocols that facilitate effective collaboration based on lessons learned and existing best practices.	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Opportunities to learn more about building data-sharing partnerships, including suggestions for laying the foundational work in relationship-building, key questions to consider throughout the process, organizational dynamics related to sharing data, and available resources and supports (i.e. examples/templates of FERPA-compliant MOUs/MOAs for data sharing, etc.). • Identify resources, supports, and processes to improve effective collaboration around shared measurement. 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • How can ECDI streamline the process for collaborative data sharing? • What additional supports are needed to build ECDI capacity for data-driven decision-making?
<i>Identify and address gaps in local capacity:</i> Partners at the local level vary in experience with and capacity for data collection.	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Conduct SWOT analysis or similar approach to assess community strengths and gaps in data-sharing capacity; 	
<i>Invest in collaborative information technology systems:</i> Different organizations, including schools and community based organizations, have different data management systems that often make it difficult to share data efficiently.	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • To support the development of an initiative-wide shared measurement system, consider investing in information technology systems that allow seamless data sharing between diverse data platforms. For example, software intermediaries that allow programs to share data without changing individual organizations' systems 	

Continuous Communication

Improved communication channels and feedback loops: Communication channels could be improved at all levels of the initiative, including between CATs and between CATs and the MCCC and Backbone members.

Improved communication platforms: Busy stakeholders can't always attend in-person meetings; which interferes with their ability to stay informed and contribute in meaningful ways.

Targeted and streamlined information sharing: At all levels, there are diverse stakeholders with varied interests, time, and capacity for engagement.

Increased communication between county initiatives: ECDI participants and other community members are unsure of how the initiatives fit together. As ECDI and other initiatives work to transition their partnership from coordination to deeper collaboration, there is a need to improve communication between partners and to the broader public.

- Consider creating a communication structure that allows for a two-way flow of information between CATs, as well as between CATs and the MCCC and Backbone.

- Rather than relying solely on email and face-to-face meetings, consider using communication platforms or strategies that allow for readily available on-demand information or virtual participation (i.e. Wiki page, pod-casts, actionable meeting notes, webinars, etc.).

- Develop a process or utilize communication tools that help identify which stakeholders need to know specific types of initiative information can help to streamline communication, reduce information overload, and increase meaningful engagement.
- Identify light-lift opportunities for community members who may be interested in engaging in short-term and small commitments initially (i.e. a loose network of advocacy stakeholders interested in making calls, writing letters, etc. during a targeted policy effort).

- Bring key stakeholders from various county initiatives and ECDI together to define and articulate what they are doing and how they all fit together; then communicate this to communities.
- Continue to participate in the Monterey County Impact group that current supports various collective impact efforts across the county.

- How can ECDI ensure that participants at all levels are included when exploring challenges and solutions to improve continuous, accurate, and effective communication?
- How can ECDI create an environment conducive to exploring and implementing proposed solutions?
- What mechanisms can be put in place to ensure sustainability of established partnerships? For example: How can ECDI best leverage the partnership with the Women's Foundation of California in a way that unites CATs beyond training activities?

Backbone Infrastructure*		
<p><i>Build CI capacity around data sharing:</i> CATs recognize the value in sharing data and using data for decision-making, but need additional support to implement.</p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Build capacity, communication and processes around data collection, including strategizing how to use existing data and clarifying what data sources and support will be available to CATs in the future. Consider investing in accessible data sharing platforms. 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • What additional resources does the Backbone need to further support CATs? • What additional learning will help the Backbone target their support effectively? • How can the Backbone leverage and integrate emergent strategies, such as the development of successful CAT leadership structures and “anchor organizations”?
<p><i>Laying foundational groundwork at the community level:</i> The ECDI backbone and MCCC were heavily invested in the upfront planning of the initiative (e.g. bringing stakeholders together to identify common indicators). There is a need to continue efforts at laying this type of foundational work at the community level.</p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Refine process for supporting initial foundational work at the community level, including investing in relationship building with executive leadership. This is especially important as ECDI expands to new communities. 	
<p><i>Increased opportunities to leverage expertise:</i> The MCCC and Backbone members have considerable expertise and connections around early childhood development. CATs would like increased interaction that allows for CATs to leverage the knowledge, networks, and resources of Backbone and MCCC members.</p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Provide opportunities for CATs to access MCCC and Backbone members to leverage their expertise and professional networks. For example, by attending CAT meetings, providing contact lists, making introductions to key partners, or providing advice that support CATs in building and maintaining membership. 	
<p><i>Onboarding new members:</i> As new members and new communities join the initiative, there is a need for creating an onboarding process and materials.</p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Support in creating onboarding kits for people and communities new to the initiative that include video, print, and e-materials that are updated regularly and easily accessible to a variety of stakeholders. • Consider developing and implementing a collective impact leadership assessment in interested communities/CATs to better understand readiness and which supports may be needed in a particular area. 	

*The entire table includes areas where the Backbone can lend support and improve ECDI structure; the Backbone Infrastructure section provides additional Backbone supports specifically requested by participants.