



Early Learning Division | 775 Summer St NE, Suite 300, Salem, OR 97301

Phone: 503-373-0066 | Fax: 503-947-1955

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**TO:** Early Learning Council

**FROM:** Early Learning Division staff

**RE:** Recommendations from Measuring Success Committee to the Early Learning Council on Hub metrics and accountability

**DATE:** June 12, 2017

**Overview:**

The Measuring Success Committee has been tasked with making recommendations to the Early Learning Council for the revision of the Hub metrics. This memo provides background on that work, as well as recommendations to the Early Learning Council on how to move forward with the Hub metrics. This memo was reviewed by the Measuring Success Committee at their June 7<sup>th</sup> meeting. The Committee approved of the recommendations in this memo. Additional revisions were also made to this memo based on feedback and input from the Committee.

In addition to meeting and discussing this topic over the last six months, the Early Learning Division Hub Team has also solicited significant input and feedback from the Hubs on the current metrics. The ELD Hub Team has also been implementing a new Hub monitoring process over the course of this last year that provides a new in-depth picture of the work of the Hubs, and provides information and insight that the Hub metrics do not capture.

The Measuring Success Committee recommends that, at this time, the process for holding the Hubs accountable should shift away from quantitative metrics and rest more on the Hub monitoring process. The Committee also recommends that the Council adopt the "Hubs Roles and Responsibilities" document as defining the shared work of the Early Learning Hubs. Early Learning Division staff will continue to work with Hubs to develop efficient methods and data sources for tracking progress in executing these roles and responsibilities. The Committee also recommends that the indicators developed for the "Hubs Roles and Responsibilities" not be used for accountability at this time and that the suitability of these indicators for accountability be re-assessed in two years.



## **Background**

The Oregon legislature created the Early Learning Hubs in 2013 with the goal of creating more coordinated and aligned regional early learning systems so that young children were more likely to arrive at school ready to succeed and more likely to live in healthy, stable and attached families. The Hubs were not designed to be direct providers of services, but to work with public and community-based organizations within their region to strengthen the focus and coordination of early learning investments. In 2015, the Oregon Legislature increased the public investment that flows through the Early Learning Hubs to about \$26 million. While this was a significant increase in funding for the Hubs, most of the state investments in early childhood do not flow through the Hubs and is outside of their direct control.

Hubs, from their inception, have been asked to focus on building cross-sector partnerships. The authorizing statute for the Hubs mandated that the Hubs' governance boards include early learning, K12, health, human services and business. In most of these cases, the Hubs are being asked to coordinate and build partnerships across sectors that have larger organizational structures and more resources, and over which the Hub has no direct authority or control. As a consequence, the success of a Hub depends upon its ability to persuade and influence its regional and community-based partners.

The authorizing statute for the Early Learning Hubs also tasked the Early Learning Council with establishing performance metrics for the Early Learning Hubs. In 2014, the Early Learning Council created an ad hoc Hub Metrics Committee to advise it on these metrics, and the Council adopted those recommendations in January, 2015. Those metrics became part of the Hub contracts for the 2015-17 biennium, the first contract cycle in which all of the Hubs were up and running from the beginning.

At the time the Early Learning Council created the ad hoc Hub Metrics Committee, the Hub system was still in its nascent stage with less than half of the Hubs formed. In developing its recommendations, the Committee grappled with a number of issues that continue: metrics that are appropriate for the stage of development of Hubs; metrics that captured long-term population goals (e.g. children ready for kindergarten) versus metrics that the Hubs could control, and therefore take responsibility for the outcome; and metrics that had reliable, accessible and transparent data sources.



During the last year, the Early Learning Division has also developed a new Hub monitoring process to both support continuous and to ensure accountability. This monitoring process includes input from community partners, as well as more in-depth self-assessment from the Hubs. Because this new monitoring process is now in place, there is also an opportunity to rethink the role of the Hub metrics. The Hub metrics no longer provide the only information on how Hubs are doing and the progress they are making.

### **Lessons Learned from Current Hub Metrics**

Over the course of this biennium, Early Learning Division staff has been able to monitor and observe the efficacy both of the current metrics themselves and how they are currently being used in the Hub system. In addition, the ELD staff has conducted extensive engagement with the Hubs on the current metrics, including surveys, round table discussions, and individual feedback. The original vision for the Hub metrics had the metrics carrying most of the weight for the accountability of the individual Hubs and the Hub system: the state would “contract” with the individual Hubs for a set of outcomes defined by the baselines and targets. If the targets were met, then a Hub would have met the terms of its contract. If the targets were not met, the Hub would be out of compliance and require corrective action.

This model of quantitative metrics-based accountability has proven challenging for a number of reasons:

**Metrics Myopia:** When the weight of accountability rests just on the quantitative targets for the metrics, it signals to the Hubs – even when that is not the intention – that their focus should be on moving those numbers and moving them within two years. This “metrics myopia” can take the focus away from what the Hub is really trying to accomplish or away from long-term strategies that may have the most lasting positive impact for children and families. As a result, rather than serve as a monitoring tool for how successfully Hub work is being accomplished, the metrics have come to define what the work of the Hubs should be.

**Incompleteness:** Any set of metrics will not capture the full scope of work and strategies that Hubs are implementing, particularly with the focus on developing regionally specific strategies. As a result, the metrics cannot tell the complete story of what the Hubs are doing and how well they are doing it.

**Lack of Focus:** At the same time that the metrics can only give a very incomplete and partial picture of the work that the Hubs are doing, the accountability function of metrics can also lead to a



lack of focus. Because the Hubs are responsible for reaching their target for each of the metrics, they can feel obligated to put equal focus on trying to accomplish them all. “Incompleteness” and “lack of focus” push in opposite directions. The fewer the metrics, the more incomplete the picture the metrics tell; the more metrics, the less focused and more scattered the work of the Hubs becomes.

**Partnership Building and Coordination:** Much of the work Hubs, particularly at this stage in their development, is focused on partnership building. While progress on many of the metrics may depend upon the strength of those partnerships, the metrics do not directly measure that partnership building work. As a result, the metrics provide, at best, limited information about some of the places where Hubs devote much of their time and energy.

**Collaboration and Control:** Much of the work of the Hubs is focused on building partnerships and increasing coordination across-sectors. Many of the current metrics were intentionally selected to emphasize cross-sector collaboration and work that depends upon those sectors. However, this focus on cross-sector works creates a challenge when these metrics are used to hold Hubs accountable. It means that Hubs are held accountable for outcomes where they may have some influence but no control, and that ultimate success depends upon the actions of other organizations over which they have no authority.

**Data:** When metrics are used for accountability it means the stakes are much higher and the standards for transparency, reliability, standardization, accuracy and timeliness of data are also much higher. The current data and data sources cannot match the high standards that accountability demands: data systems are nonexistent or under development, data are often self-reported by the Hubs and without verified reliability and validity, self-generated data are not comparable across hubs, and the lack of timely updates of data prevents a rigorous process of continuous tracking and quality improvement. This same data can still be useful for planning, monitoring and tracking progress, but it is harder for it meet the scrutiny and rigor that an accountability function demands.

**Track Record:** Before metrics can be used for accountability, they need to have a track record. There needs to be sufficient “data about the data” to be able to tell if they are providing meaningful information about the changes that the system is hoping to see. That track record is also needed in order to establish meaningful, ambitious but achievable targets.

The challenges identified above will not be resolved by developing a new or refined set of accountability metrics, particularly given the current limitations around data and data sources.



Addressing these challenges requires reframing and rethinking the use of the metrics, as well as rethinking how the Early Learning Division and the Early Learning Council meet their responsibility for monitoring and assuring the accountability of Hubs at this time. Using a more holistic approach for accountability that includes survey data and qualitative information, such as with the Hub monitoring process, and using the more quantitative metrics to track progress, while acknowledging limited and incomplete data sources, is more appropriate for the Hubs and the early learning system at this stage of their development.

### **Hub Monitoring Process**

Over the last year, the Early Learning Division has been working with the Early Learning Hubs to develop a new monitoring system that collects information and provides a more complete picture than can be captured by the Hub performance metrics. The purposes of this monitoring process are:

- Ensure that Hubs are:
  - Developing collaborative systems in their regions;
  - Investing strategically in priority populations; and
  - Showing progress on outcomes related to Early Learning System's three main goals.
- Support a culture of continuous quality improvement across the Early Learning Hubs.
- Engage in shared learning as a system, including ELC, ELD, Hubs and community partners.

The monitoring process involves a number of steps spread out over the course of the year. It is also imbedded in the broader system of supports and technical assistance for the Hubs that includes regular phone calls with the ELD Hub Team, monthly webinars, quarterly reports, regional meetings and twice yearly in-person collaboratives. The monitoring process began with a preparatory site visit by the Hub team last year, where Hubs identified goals and priorities, best practices to share with other Hubs, and needs for technical assistance. This winter, surveys were sent out and completed by each Hub's community partners. Hubs also completed a self-assessment, answered narrative questions about their work and progress towards implementing their work plans, and filled out a Self-scoring Monitoring Rubric. After these steps were completed, the ELD Hub Team met with each of the Hubs and reviewed these documents, identified areas for growth, and completed the scoring rubric. At the June 22, 2017, Early Learning Council meeting, the ELD Hub Team will present a hub-by-hub review of the results of the monitoring process that will include strengths and areas of growth for each hub, the hub-identified quality improvement plans, and, if needed, a required action plan to be approved by the ELC.



This monitoring process addresses the challenges with using the current performance metrics for the purpose of accountability. Because it includes narrative questions and a review of progress towards completing their work plan, it enables the Hubs to provide a more rounded picture of their work, and for a more holistic view of their progress. It also makes possible a clearer articulation of the Hub's focus, its priority populations and the strategies it has identified to drive towards outcomes. The survey of regional and community-based partners also provides a unique window into the work that Hubs are doing to build partnerships and the extent to which these partners have bought into the work of the Hubs.

### **Recommendations to the Early Learning Council**

The Measuring Success Committee recommends that:

1. The Early Learning Council adopt the "Hubs' Roles and Responsibilities" document as the shared definition of the work of the Early Learning Hubs. (See attachment #1)
2. The Early Learning Division staff continue to work with Early Learning Hubs:
  - a. To identify appropriate indicators (with no more than one required indicator shared by all Hubs per "Role") for each of the "Roles."
  - b. To identify appropriate data and data sources for the indicators.
  - c. Ensure that the data and data sources minimize additional administrative burdens and rely on existing data sources as much as possible.
  - d. Provide explicit guidance and acknowledgement on the limitations of any selected data sources.
  - e. Provide support for using these indicators to guide work plan development and progress monitoring.
3. In light of the new Hub monitoring process, the challenges with data and data sources, and the lack of a track record with data sources, do not use indicators developed this biennium for accountability purposes.
4. At the end of next biennium ELD staff, working with the Measuring Success Committee, evaluate any indicators developed to see if they can work effectively as accountability measures, and based on that analysis bring recommendations to the Early Learning Council.

The Measuring Success Committee expressed a strong long-term commitment to using outcome-focused data for the purpose of accountability. The Committee also identified one of its roles as supporting the Early Learning Council in achieving its strategic vision of data driving decision-making. As part of its work for the next year, the Measuring Success Committee will be developing recommendations for the Early Learning Council to achieve this goal, including tangible steps towards greater data integration and more mature use of data within the early learning system.



## **(Attachment #1)**

### **Early Learning Hub Roles & Responsibilities**

*The purpose of this document is define the shared work of the sixteen Early Learning Hubs in achieving the three goals shared by the Early Learning Council, the Early Learning Division and the Hubs: (1) the early childhood system is aligned, coordinated and family-centered; (2) children are supported to enter school ready to succeed; and (3) children live in healthy, stable and attached families. The particular strategies, actions and partnerships that Hubs will take in fulfilling these roles will differ from Hub to Hub. This document will be used to ensure a shared understanding of the work across the early learning system and the Hubs. Early Learning Division will work with Hubs to develop shared, meaningful and efficient measures of progress for each of these roles so progress can be tracked across the sixteen Hubs. This document will also be used to inform the Hub monitoring and accountability process and support Hubs in focusing and refining their work.*



## Early Learning Hub Roles & Responsibilities

### Goal One: The early childhood system is aligned, coordinated and family-centered

1.1 The role of the hub is to develop and implement, in partnership with the five sectors (early learning, K-12, health, human services, and business), a shared strategic vision and work plan to achieve the Early Learning System goals of (1) an aligned, coordinated, and family-centered system, (2) children entering school ready to succeed, and (3) healthy, stable, and attached families.

1.2 The role of the hubs is to aggregate, interpret and effectively communicate available data in order to (1) identify focus populations, (2) track the well-being of children and families in the community, (3) guide development of their work plan and its revision in a process of continuous quality improvement; and (4) facilitate collaboration across sectors and partners.

1.3 The role of the hub, in partnership with the five sectors, is to identify focus and priority populations in the community using best available data and help direct community resources to address the needs of those populations.

1.4 The role of the hub is to work with community partners to build understanding and grow community support for the shared vision, and to facilitate opportunities for partners to integrate that vision into their own work plans and strategies.

1.5 The role of the hubs is, with partners and all five sectors, to identify and prioritize barriers children and families experience when attempting to access supports to achieve positive outcomes, and to strategically work to remove prioritized barriers.

1.6 The role of the hub is to incorporate family voice from focus populations and adjust in a culturally responsive manner in hub planning, strategies and activities.

### Goal Two: Children are supported to enter school ready to succeed

2.1 The role of the hub is to facilitate shared understanding and collaboration between early learning and K-12 partners regarding expectations about the skills and abilities of children entering school.

2.2 The role of the hub is to facilitate culturally responsive family engagement activities across the community that promote seamless transitions into kindergarten and the family's comfort and engagement at their child's school.

2.3 The role of the hub is to work with partners to coordinate identification of children & families from focus and priority populations, to recruit them for early learning activities, enroll them in services, and make timely referrals with smooth transitions.





2.4 The role of the hub is to work with community partners to increase the percentage of children from focus and priority populations who experience early learning activities that prepare them for success in school.

**Goal Three: Families are healthy, stable and attached**

3.1 The role of the hub is to work with early learning programs and other partners to ensure children and families from focus and priority populations have access to culturally responsive family support services.

3.2 The role of hub is to collaborate with the health sector to address the social determinants of health that lead to health and well-being for young children and their families.

3.3 The role of the hub is to work with community partners to increase protective factors and reduce childhood experiences of abuse or neglect.

3.4 The role of the hub is to work with community partners to ensure children and families from focus and priority populations have access to medical, dental, mental health and other health care services.

