



Early Learning Communications and Marketing Stakeholders Meeting Summary

On April 1, 2015, early learning stakeholders in New Mexico came together to assess the need and support for an umbrella early childhood awareness campaign in the state and identify high-level components of a successful campaign. The meeting was organized by the New Mexico Race to the Top – Early Learning Challenge (RTT-ELC) Leadership Team and co-sponsored by the Early Childhood Comprehensive Systems Grant.

Facilitated by the NC Early Childhood Foundation and Collective Action Strategies, stakeholders from state agencies, higher learning institutions, local and statewide non-profits and foundations worked together to consider and discuss the opportunity for an umbrella early childhood awareness campaign.

The meeting agenda was informed by:

- The findings of environmental scan conducted by the NC Early Childhood Foundation in February. The scan examined stakeholder opinions of Race to the Top – Early Learning Challenge and early childhood in New Mexico and media coverage of early childhood issues. It included stakeholder interviews, a survey and media analysis.
- A pre-meeting survey that asked, “Whose support if you had it would make the greatest difference for young children in New Mexico?” and “What would you want them to do?”

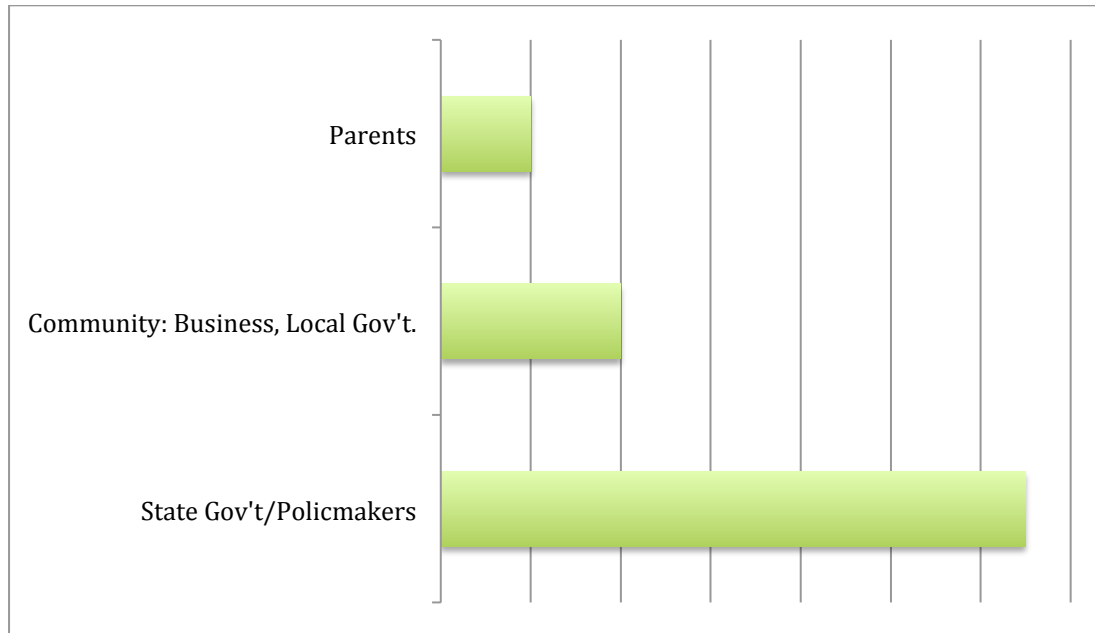
This report summarizes results of the meeting and identifies common themes.

Pre-Meeting Survey Results

Prior to the meeting, attendees were asked to answer two questions. The first was “Whose support if you had it would make the greatest difference for young children in New Mexico?”

The results clustered in three main areas:

- State Government – Legislature, Governor, Cabinet Secretaries.
- Community Support – Local Leaders including Government, Business.
- Parents



Attendees were surprised that parents received the fewest mentions. Ongoing discussion throughout the day addressed the role of parents either as stakeholders that needed to be included in future meetings or as a target audience for a campaign.

The second question asked was “What would you want them to do?”

Answers to this question were clustered in the following six areas.

- Invest in infants, teachers, families, parents, in the entire system.
- Invest in promotion of child well-being and the importance of early childhood.
- Become better informed – visit classrooms, understand evidence and research.
- Ensure businesses and communities are family friendly.
- Create children centered policies that drive collaboration across departments, etc.
- Become active in discussion – voting, rallies and community conversations.

Three common themes emerged: coordination (alignment among agencies, both state and local; among organizations, especially those conducting engagement and outreach efforts), communication (across the entire system, breaking down silos, telling the story of why early learning) and investments (in the system; in families; in teachers; in promoting child well-being and the importance of early childhood).

What Does Success Look Like?

Stakeholders worked in small groups to consider what could be accomplished by collaborating under an umbrella awareness campaign and began to identify components of the campaign.

The groups worked to:

1. Define success in 2017 – What is the best-case scenario? What do these accomplishments look like?
2. Look back on 2015 and describe the situation when they started working collaboratively.
3. Identify how they moved from the present to 2017.

Most responses fell into one of the following themes:

- Access
- Alignment
- Communication
- Data
- Funding
- Quality Champions
- Results
- Trust/Collaboration

Attendees took the assignment to heart and were bold in their definitions of success. It is important to note that a communications campaign can contribute to many of the ideas discussed and that many would need a much broader strategic approach of which communications can play a supportive role. Below we give examples of responses for each theme by question.

| It's 2017. What does a successful statewide early education awareness campaign look like? | It's 2015. What did the situation look like when we started? | How did we get from the current to 2017? |
|---|---|--|
| Access – access is easier and affordable and therefore more families are using it. | Access – access was not easy to navigate; families were unaware of available services. | |
| Alignment – the system is aligned from birth to 8 and there is a continuum of care with local organizations and agencies equipped to | Alignment – system was fragmented; not all communities had infrastructure to deliver services. | Coordination - plan was established with long and short term goals and a communications plan. |

| | | |
|--|--|--|
| deliver it. | | |
| Communication – one umbrella message is being used across the system to engage a wide audience. | Communication – no unified message or coordination of messages; common agenda and action plan was starting to be developed. | Communication - message created was simple, visual, unifying and accessible to a wide audience; focus was on solutions and connected children to the state’s economic future. |
| Data – database in place with the right indicators; results are being tracked. | | Data - developed a survey about the current landscape as a baseline; interviewed missing players to gain insight. |
| Funding – aligned system has sustained funding; providers receive increased compensation; business is investing. | Funding - funding was beginning to increase; opportunity to partner with foundations. | Funding - – RTT funds were provided as seed money and leveraged for new investments and sustainability. |
| Quality Champions – new actors are champions for early learning – business, faith, military, law enforcement, tribal leaders and families. | Quality Champions – partnerships and champions for early learning were identified; plan for engaging leaders was developing. | Quality Champions - Circles of Champions were formed in communities across the state, pledged support of early childhood; speakers bureau developed, community forums held. |
| Results – more children are ready for school; abuse has decreased; Kids Count ranking has improved; third grade reading, graduation rate and immunization rates are up. | Current Environment – less than 50% of NM children are reading at grade level; lots of activity, little achievement. | Current Environment - reinvigorated the Children’s Cabinet to support more early childhood investments. |
| Trust/Collaboration – public trusts the system; there is trust amongst those in system delivery. | Trust/Collaboration – public trust is lacking; collaboration is piecemeal in the system; some mistrust among early childhood community. | Trust/Collaboration – RTT was the impetus to build trust and collaboration; stakeholders contributed to the big picture and collaboration was intentionally built across departments and with families. |

A Path Forward

In this independent writing exercise, meeting attendees answered the following questions:

- How can you imagine supporting such as initiative?
- What would that support look like?

Attendees provided a wealth of ideas to consider covering a range of possible commitments and activities. Most responses fell distinctly into two categories – supporting the creation of the campaign and implementing the campaign within one’s organization.

Examples of how stakeholders could **support the creation of the campaign** include:

- Research, data, data visualization.
- Subject expertise.
- Ideas and framing for messaging, convening focus groups, etc.
- Campaign strategies; developing asks.
- Developing presentations.
- Sharing experiences of existing local umbrella campaigns to learn from them.
- Facilitate dialogue to build the initiative.
- Funding various parts of the campaign.
- Bringing funders together to coordinate funding.

Examples of how stakeholders could assist in **implementing the campaign** include:

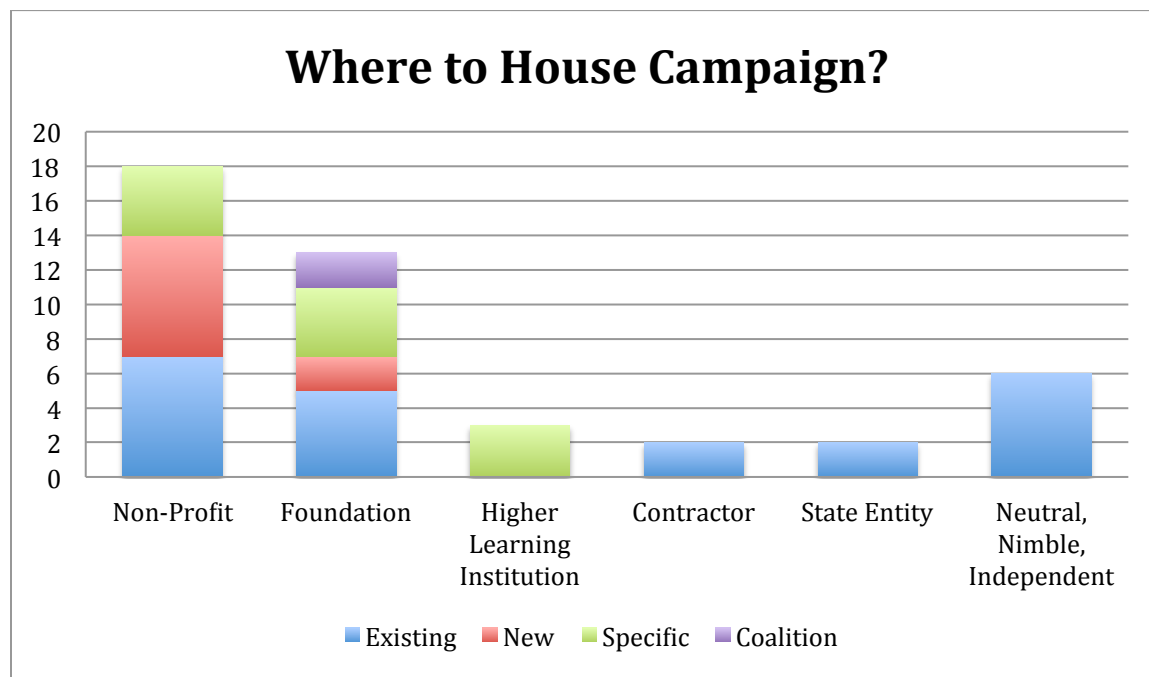
- Incorporate message into everything we do.
- Engage our partners in the message.
- Train our partners to deliver the message.
- Build capacity for our network to engage in the campaign.
- Ensure agency staff are trained in using message so they can deliver it in the field.
- Build circles of champions and train them.
- Funding various parts of the campaign.
- Communications expertise including social media to get the word out and providing story content for website, etc.

Housing a Campaign

Feedback about where to house a collaborative awareness campaign yielded many ideas. However, most stakeholders coalesced around attributes of non-partisan, nimble and independent. Most prefer the campaign to be housed in a non-profit organization or foundation. Within those choices, views varied widely around whether an existing or new entity would be preferred. While the idea of coalition of foundations was proposed, it is interesting to note that no one raised the idea a coalition of non-profits organizations.

Some attendees named specific organizations that could house the campaign, including the Thornburg Foundation, NMAEYC, United Way and the University of New Mexico.

Several stakeholders also mentioned funding, noting that both private and public funds were preferred and that funds should be committed at the outset of the campaign.



* In the graph above, “specific” means that entities were named in an answer.

Who Needs to Be at the Table?

Most stakeholders felt that tribal communities, including tribal leaders, a wide variety of service providers and new voices needed to be at the table to ensure a collaborative awareness campaign moves forward effectively. The new voices category includes faith, law, military and business leaders at the community and state level. The answers to this question may be slightly skewed in that some responders may have interpreted the question to focus on “who was NOT at the meeting and needed to be there.”

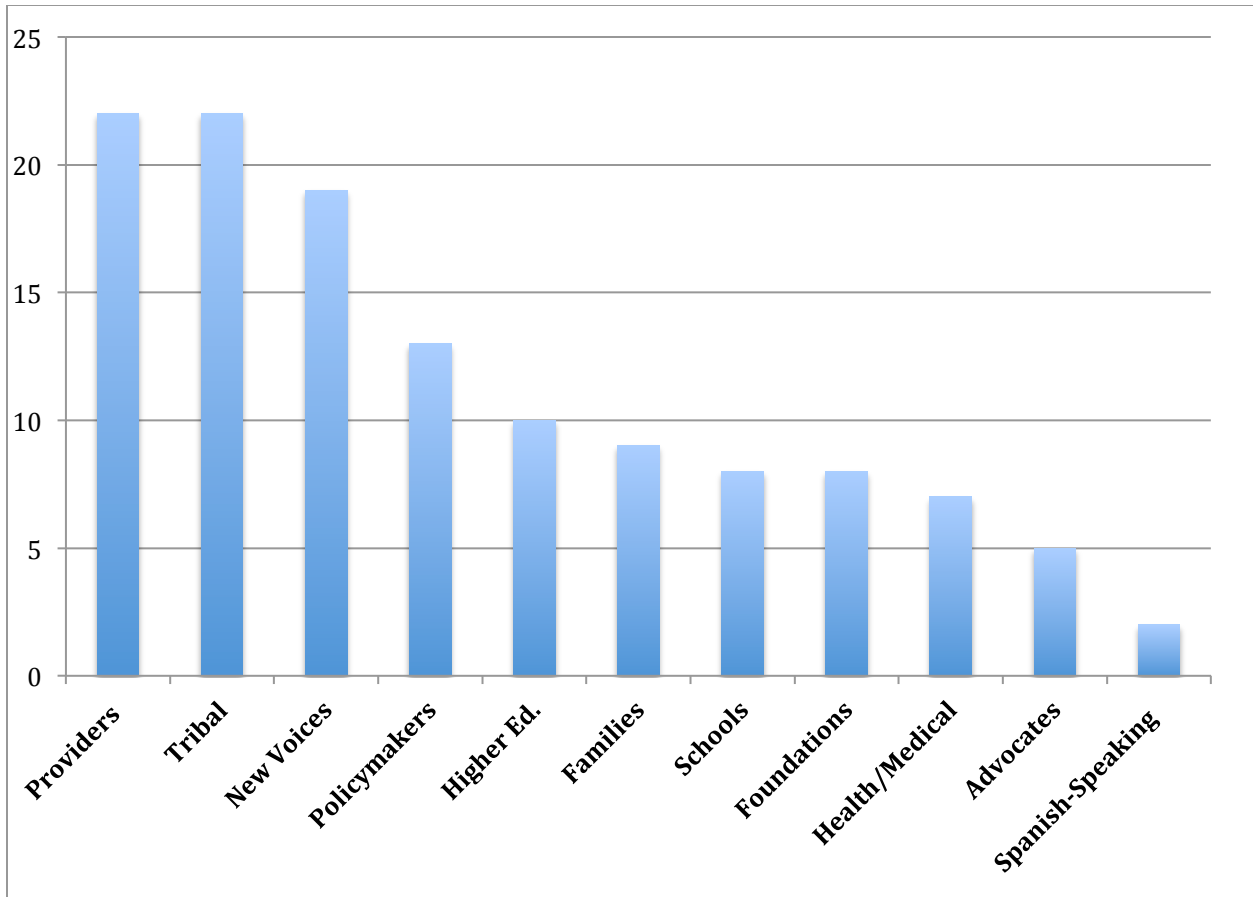


Chart Notes: The provider category included several different types of providers such as Head Start, WIC, early care, etc. The tribal category included leaders and communities. New voices included business, law, faith and military. Schools included boards of education, principals, superintendents and teachers.

What Else Do You Want to Be Sure We Know?

Stakeholders had a lot to offer when answering with question “What Else Do You Want to Be Sure We Know?” Below are themes that were noted from the various answers.

Funding:

- Need for funding, a fundraising strategy and to understand available resources, how to ensure sustainability of the work.

Trust

- Need to continue to build trust, be transparent, and clarify the structure of this effort, decision-making and roles.
- Need to convince those not in the room that this is a credible effort.
- Keep communications happening among the group; ensure that report back from the meeting is given to all participants.

Parameters

- Clarify if the campaign would focus on birth to 5 or birth to 8?

Communications

- Desire to decide on the overarching vision, clear goals, target audience, message, then create a strategic plan, a management plan, a marketing plan, a timeline, a budget.
- Create an inventory of public awareness efforts that are underway.
- Be culturally competent in communication strategy.
- Connect state leaders with families and workforce to open their eyes.

Do You Still Want to Be Involved?

Forty of the 55 attendees signed up to remain involved in this discussion about launching an umbrella early childhood awareness campaign.

Also, 45 attendees voted yes for the following “New Mexico should launch a collaborative awareness early childhood campaign” and one stakeholder voted no.

Meeting Evaluation

A majority of attendees indicated that the meeting was well worth their time on the evaluation. Only one attendee rated the meeting a 3 and there were no 1 or 2 ratings (not worth my time). Stakeholders found the following aspects of the meeting most and least helpful:

Most Helpful

- Sitting with people I didn't know or know very well
- Table work
- Future exercise
- Facilitation
- Learning about communication efforts in other states

Least Helpful

- Dot voting
- No economic data was discussed
- No introductions of everyone in the room
- Too many white people in the room

Meeting Evaluation Results

