

IL Early Learning Council- Integration & Alignment Committee

Recommendations for Aligning Regional Intermediary Functions

Pre-read for ELC Executive Committee meeting

February 5, 2024

Project Objectives

Background

Illinois has a number of regional intermediary structures that support the Early Childhood Education and Care (ECEC) system by helping communities access and utilize State programs and funds to meet local needs.

Concern

They provide similar services but are governed by individual programs and State agencies, which has led to silos and duplication that makes it difficult for families and communities to access supports comprehensively.

Objective

The Governor's Office of Illinois asked the Early Learning Council, Integration & Alignment Committee (IAC) to review the functions of ECEC regional intermediaries and provide directional recommendations to increase efficacies, efficiencies, and alignments of regional supports.

Areas of focus

Regional Intermediaries in scope ¹:

- ❖ Child Care Resource and Referral Agencies (CCR&R) – Child Care Assistance Program
- ❖ Child and Family Connections Offices (CFC) - Early Intervention program
- ❖ Local Interagency Councils (LIC) - Early Intervention program
- ❖ Birth to Five Illinois (B-5 IL)
- ❖ All Our Kids Early Childhood Networks (AOK)
- ❖ Coordinated Intake (CI) – MIECHV Home Visiting program
- ❖ Regional Offices of Education (ROE)

Prioritized functions:

- ❖ Resource and referral / System point of entry
- ❖ Eligibility determination
- ❖ Case management
- ❖ Training & Technical Assistance (T&TA)
- ❖ Community development, elevating community voice

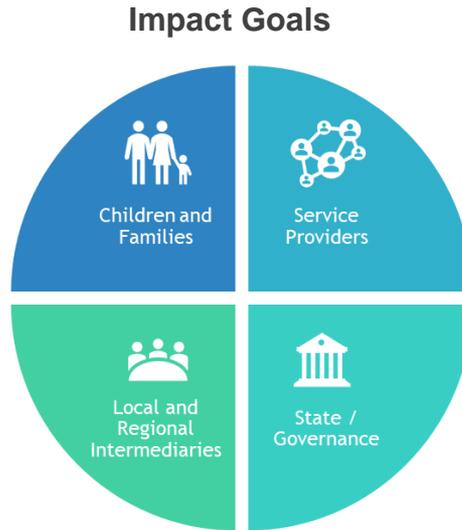
¹ The committee recognizes that this scope is not inclusive of the full ECEC system, and that these recommendations are based on the State's selection of regional intermediaries to focus on during this planning period as a first step to aligning regional supports.

Impact goals

Develop recommendations to integrate and align the functions of ECEC regional intermediaries to...

Create a more efficient, simplified, consistent, and seamless experience for families to connect to services.

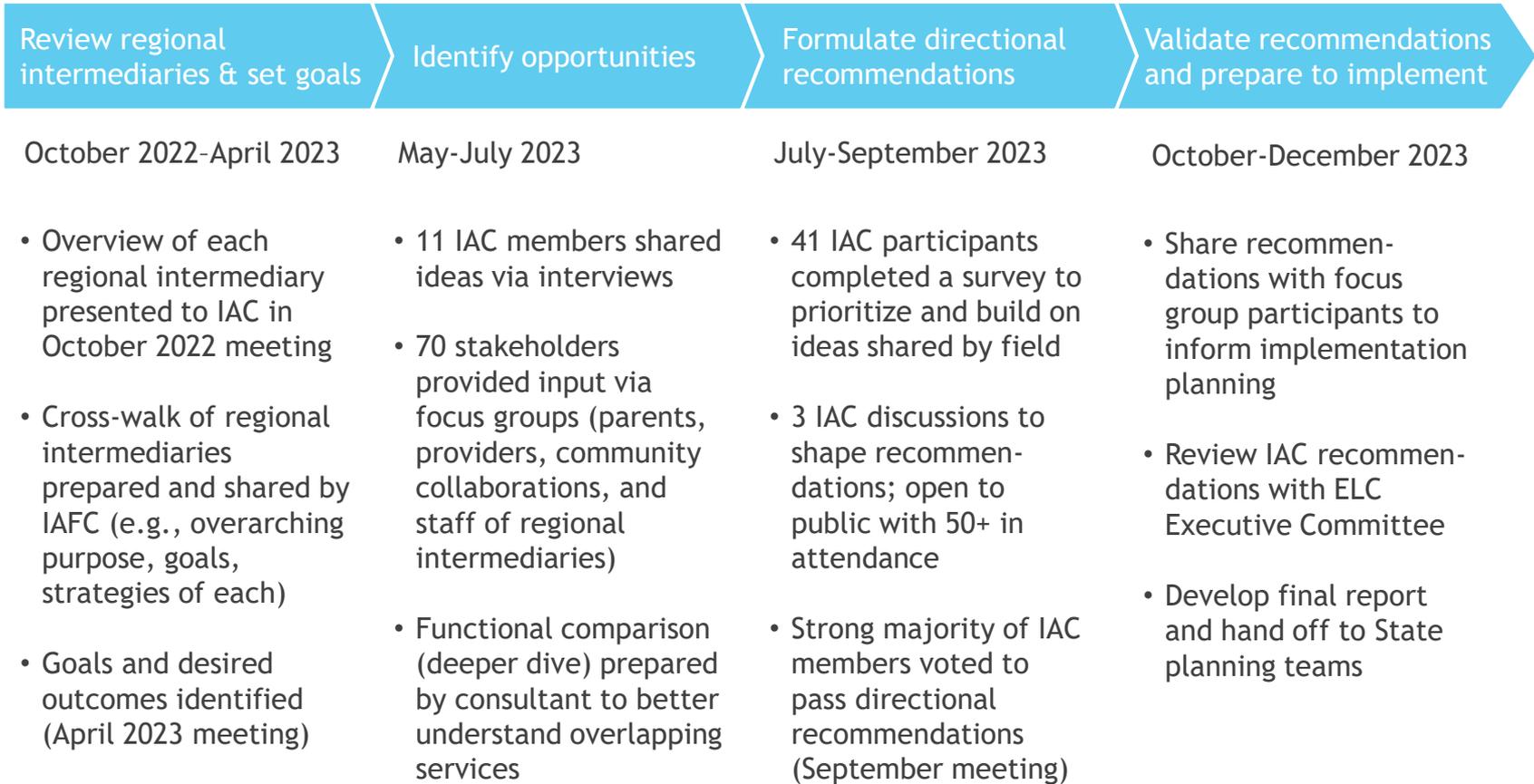
Enable more collaboration between regional intermediaries and with local collaborations to improve services and align supports to local needs.



Increase provider capacity to make referrals by providing easier, more efficient navigation and systems.

Streamline operations and reduce duplication to increase funding efficacy and expand equitable access to services.

Approach to form IAC recommendations



IAC Directional Recommendations

1 Aligned Governance and Systems

- **Align service area boundaries** to simplify navigation and consolidate partnerships (CCR&Rs, CFC/LIC, AOK, CI, B-5 IL/ROE).
- **Unify intake and application forms/processes** for CCAP, EI, and HV to enable system points of entry to provide coordinated intake, eligibility determination, and referrals across ECEC programs (CCR&Rs, CFCs, CI).

2 Integrated Intake & Referral Services

- **Expand system point of entry's scope and capabilities** to provide integrated intake, referral, and a "warm hand off" across ECEC programs (CCR&Rs, CFCs, CI).
- **Develop a state-wide integrated intake & referral data system** to streamline referrals between regional intermediaries & providers (CCR&Rs, CFC, CI, AOK).
- **Streamline and consolidate support for referrals to community resources** (CCR&Rs, CFCs, CI).

3 Shared Community Development

- **Merge regional intermediary councils and meetings to create one planning/reporting table** per region for ECEC, coordinated by one regional intermediary and with a defined role and sufficient capacity for the other regional intermediaries to participate (CCR&Rs, LIC/CFC, AOK, CI, B-5 IL, ROE).
- **Develop a single, shared ECEC agenda** for each region that all regional intermediaries support (CCR&Rs, LIC/CFC, AOK, CI, B-5 IL, ROE).
- **Unify needs assessments and parent surveys** into one per region, and **create universal access** to this input. **Reduce cadence of assessments/surveys** to shift resources to driving change (CCR&Rs, LIC, B-5 IL, AOK).

Additional considerations

- Extend integrated intake & referral to include PFA/PFAE, PI, HS/EHS, and other DHS programs for families (e.g., WIC, Family Connects, etc.)
- Continue to analyze T&TA alignments but inclusive of all 3rd party providers and within a provider-focused context (e.g., Workforce Development)
- Define a model for supporting EC local collaborations more comprehensively and the role of regional intermediaries in this

Appendix

Insights (1/2): Review of regional functions (similarities/differences)

Program-funded supports common across contracts

		1 Resource and Referral / System Point of Entry			2 Eligibility Determination	3 Case Management	4 T&TA (to providers, not staff)		5 Community Development			
		Intake services / referrals to State programs	Referrals to ECEC service providers	Referrals to community supports	Eligibility verification / Service plan development	Service coordination / experience monitoring	Technical assistance (Program and Systems)	Training (coaching, delivering training, credentials)	Facilitating communication / collaboration	Needs assessments	Community planning (action)	Elevating family voice
State-wide Structures ¹	CCR&R (CCAP)	Light (varies)	X (child care)	X (Referral Specialist)	X (CCAP)	X (warm handoff)	X (CCAP)	X (safety, quality)	X (varies)	X (child care focused)	X (participates)	X (family survey)
	CFC (EI)		X (EI)	Light (if don't qualify)	X (EI)	X (EI service plan)	X (EI)	Light (Social Emotional consultants)				
	LIC (EI)								X (Child Find)	Light		Light (council member)
	Birth to Five Illinois						Light (grant applications)		X (ECEC and adjacent)	X (Regional Needs Assessment)	X (Implementation plan)	X (Family Council)
Not State-wide	AOK Networks	X (IRIS)	X (IRIS)	X (IRIS)			X (IRIS, AOK Connect)	X (coordinating cross-sector)	X (Prenatal, B-5 growth/development)	X (CAPAP ²)	X (Strategic plan ²)	X (Parent Ambassadors, Family Engagement)
	Coordinated Intake (MIECHV-HV)	X (HV)	X (HV)	Light (if don't qualify)					X (Network partners)			X (parent members)

1 ROEs are excluded here because they currently have no statutory requirements for Early Childhood; however, a few ROEs provide ECEC supports via public and private grants.

2 CAPAP = Community Assessment Planning and Action Process. Strategic plans related to Network Capacity, Information and Referral, and Child/Family Outcomes.

Insights (2/2): Input from the field - common themes

Function	Opportunities/Barriers
1 Resource and Referral / System Point of Entry	<ul style="list-style-type: none">Disjoint programs and systems cause families to work with regional structures individually and repeat burdensome intake and applicationRegional structures use and maintain different referral systems and databases (e.g., IRIS, Visit Tracker, CCR&R Provider database)Significant time is spent on building relationships and generating knowledge individually to provide community referrals and resources
2 Eligibility Determination	<ul style="list-style-type: none">Regional structures don't currently have the capacity, expertise, or access to do cross-systems intake and eligibility determination
3 Case Management	<ul style="list-style-type: none">Differing, complex requirements makes it hard to enroll in programs and find service providers; parents need to be guided through this, but regional entities are not equipped to do this across programs
4 Training & Technical Assistance	<ul style="list-style-type: none">Disparate training requirements make it hard for regional entities to provide credit-bearing cross-sector trainingMultiple training systems makes it hard to help providers find training that meets their needs and provide cross-sector training
5 Community Development	<ul style="list-style-type: none">There are disparate agendas, structures, and unclear roles across regional structures; entities are supporting each other but not integrating efforts in most regionsDuplicative meetings and activities spread resources thin (misaligned / overlapping service areas, individual needs assessments & surveys)Great variation in collaboration models across the State; concerns of sustainability, progress, and equity in many communities

"Intake is a real pain point for families; they are telling their story over and over." CCR&R

"A list of names is nice but having someone help you find help can make all the difference." FAC

"My CCR&R hosts so many good workshops but they don't meet my credentials so I don't attend." Provider

"B-5 IL has been great at bringing us together, but it is shaping up to be a regional silo like the others." Community Collaboration

"We have so many report-out meetings in our community; that time could be used to solve problems together instead." CI Worker

"Parents say, 'You know my story and I still can't find child care or preschool in my community.'" B-5 IL FACE

70 stakeholders across Illinois participated in listening sessions to discuss regional functions

Group	Stakeholders	Participants
Parents / Parent Voice	• ELC – Family Advisory Council (FAC)	5
	• B-5 IL Family & Community Engagement Specialists (FACE)	7
Providers	• ECEC Providers: Child care, EI therapists, Home Visitors	11
Community Collaborations	• EC Community Collaborations	4
	• CI Workers	7
	• AOK Networks	5
State-wide Regional structures	• CCR&R Directors	9
	• B-5 IL Regional Council Managers	7
	• CFC Managers	8
	• LIC Coordinators	7

