Equitable Early Care and Education System: An Alignment Framework

Through alignment, city leaders can work across sectors and their communities to align programs, design policies and ultimately build a system that is responsive and supportive of young children and their families. Through alignment, city leaders can prevent duplication of services; address gaps in services; unify citywide policies and practices to improve quality and wellbeing; and create an equitable early care and education system. In an equitable early care and education system, all children and families have what they need to ensure all children reach their potential.

Eight Elements of an Equitable Early Care and Education System

1. Partnerships with multi-sector, collaborative structures
   Public and private sectors work together to ensure the community has the policies, resources and infrastructure for creating an aligned and equitable early care and education system.

2. Data-driven practices, policies and strategies that inform policy and support equitable outcomes
   A shared system for data collection, analysis and reporting informs the decisions of all stakeholders.

3. Family engagement and support
   Families are fully engaged partners and cities foster relationships that fully engage families and children in successful, equitable early learning experiences.

4. Access to affordable, high-quality early care and education
   All families have access to affordable, diverse, high-quality early care and education environments.

5. Coordinated continuum of developmentally appropriate care and education
   The continuum of care in each community is aligned and offers developmentally appropriate care and education to its children.

6. Professional development and support for the early childhood workforce
   The early learning workforce is elevated and valued for its contribution and is appropriately compensated, trained and supported to give high-quality learning experiences to all children.

7. Sustainability and coordination of sufficient resources, funding, policies and practices
   Strong, sustained and coordinated community support on behalf of children and families ensures sufficient resources and funding.

8. Community awareness and engagement
   An equitable early care and education continuum is a priority for all elected officials and community stakeholders.

Using the Framework:

Each element has four sections that can be used by local coalitions and city staff to reflect on the current early childhood landscape within their city and consider areas of opportunity.

Vision Statement
A high-level vision of what the element would look like if it were fully realized within a city. A brief discussion follows the vision statement and provides insight and learnings from the revision process.

Components and Attributes
Provides specificity and deepening of the element definition.

City Support
Potential ways city leadership and municipalities can take action to achieve this element.

Equity Considerations
Provides questions to consider in order to build equity into all elements and aspects of early care and education.

For more information:
https://www.nlc.org/early-childhood-success