

Strengthening Tribal-State Relations

Wisconsin Race to the Top—Early Learning Challenge Grant



Executive Summary

Final Report 2013 to 2017



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**Final Report
2013–2017**

**Prepared by
Jill Haglund**

Early Childhood Consultant, Department of Public Instruction

**Pamela Torres
Disproportionality Technical Assistance Network**

David O'Connor

American Indian Studies Consultant, Department of Public Instruction



Wisconsin Department of Public Instruction

**Tony Evers, PhD, State Superintendent
Madison, Wisconsin**

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The Office of Early Learning
Content and Learning Team
Wisconsin Department of Public Instruction
125 South Webster Street
Madison, WI 53703
(608) 267-9625

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Executive Summary

Wisconsin Race to the Top— Early Learning Challenge Grant: Strengthening Tribal-State Relations

In 2013, Wisconsin was selected to receive \$34 million in federal grant dollars for education and early childhood development initiatives through the federal Race to the Top—Early Challenge Grant (RTT-ELC). The Great Lakes Inter-Tribal Council was awarded \$548,000 to coordinate the implementation of the project.

The Department of Children and Families DCF) was the overall RTT-ELC grant lead. The Department of Public Instruction (DPI) was the lead on the Tribal-State Relations Project. The Department of Health Services (DHS) was also a partner in the grant and project. Many other state associations participated in work groups and project activities. Wisconsin's 11 federally recognized American Indian nations and tribal communities participated in the project. A complete report provides more details on this project: <https://dpi.wi.gov/early-childhood/prof-dev> and <http://www.collaboratingpartners.com/diverse-populations/wi-tribal-nations/>.

We needed to work with other organizations and systems to build infrastructures that inform leadership, promote collaborations, improve communication among sectors, and support resource sharing to improve services to young tribal children and their families.

Project Objectives

- Establish a structure to improve communication and resource sharing among tribal nations, state agencies, early childhood programs, and associations.
- Develop strategies for improving coordination of early childhood professional development efforts.

Inter- and Intra-Agency and Tribal Collaboration

- Collaborate with the Great Lakes Inter-Tribal Council (GLITC), the Disproportionality Technical Assistance Network, the Wisconsin Early Childhood Collaborating Partners (WECCP) Braided Funding Initiative, the Department of Children and Families (DCF), and the Department of Health Services (DHS).

The project had links to many leadership groups, such as the GLITC Board, the Wisconsin Indian Education Association, and the Inter-Tribal Child Care Association. We needed to find better ways of sharing information and engaging them in early childhood issues.

- Refocus and expand state and tribal collaboration through meetings of department tribal liaisons, the Tribal-State Relations Work Group, and the Tribal Early Childhood Workgroup.
- Obtain tribal input and build networks through tribal gatherings.

Funded Activities

- coordinator position at GLITC
- community engagement mini-grants for tribal communities
- professional development projects and packages aimed at increasing tribal members' participation
- collaborative planning and networking work groups

Scope of Work and Impact

1) Create a central point for coordination among tribal nations, state staff across multiple departments, and other cross-sector professionals:

- a. In 2014, the project coordinator was hired through an interagency agreement with the Great Lakes Inter-Tribal Council (GLITC), to provide the central point for coordination.
- b. The project partnered with the Disproportionality Technical Assistance Network early childhood project.
- c. The project worked in conjunction with the Wisconsin Early Childhood Collaborating Partners (WECCP) Braided Funding Initiative.

2) Seek input from tribal communities on direction of project:

- a. Tribal listening session in 2013 and 2017 brought state leaders together with tribal leaders and their early childhood program representatives with the goal of identifying current community issues related to helping every tribal child from birth to age 8 be safe, healthy, and successful in school and life. Lessons learned focused on grant implementation, perceived needs and gaps in service, and what leaders need to know about early childhood.
- b. A wide variety of other strategies were identified and addressed and are identified in the full report. For example, input resulted in changes to project professional development strategies, with direct

efforts to ensure that tribal personnel became trainers, training came into the tribal communities, and trainings were reflective of tribal culture.

3) Establish a structure for communication and resource sharing among the state's early childhood structures and the tribal nations:

- a. Early Childhood Tribal Grant Planning Team: Partnering coordinators provided leadership and implemented strategies through a jointly developed work plan.
- b. Tribal-State Relations Work Group: The RTT-ELC project expanded on a pre-RTT work group to share RTT-ELC resources, implementation, and strategies among cross-sector state agencies and associations.
- c. State Department Tribal Liaisons Workgroup: Tribal liaisons from the state departments met periodically and participated in the other work groups to ensure intra- and interdepartmental coordination and consistent implementation of strategies.
- d. Tribal Early Childhood Workgroup: This work group focused on membership of early childhood program personnel and other tribal representatives from each of the 11 tribal nations and many of their community partners. Members of the other three work groups also participated.
- e. A variety of communication structures were used to share information and resources related to the project and tribal early childhood issues, including a scan of state department programs, participant contact information, listservs, and a web page.

4) Increase in inter- and intratribal networking and coordination with other structures:

- a. The Tribal Early Childhood Workgroup brought the various programs, services, and leaders from each tribal nation together to share information, network, create common priorities, and develop specific strategies for project work in the utilization of state professional development opportunities, potential gaps, and areas for improvement.
- b. The use of a common 90-day planning process, introduced by the Menominee Nation and consultant Jody Pfarr, supported internal tribal planning and intertribal sharing.

Communication and networking structures built stronger linkages and supported deeper early childhood awareness, representation, and collaboration.

Project efforts respected that the tribal communities were different from the norm of educational institutional instruction and for child development.
Our growth marks are intertwined with cultural beliefs on child rearing.

- c. Throughout the project, several existing structures were identified as important systems to engage in the early childhood effort, including the GLITC board, the Wisconsin Indian Education Association (WIEA), the Wisconsin Inter-Tribal Child Care Association (WITCCA), the Governor's Early Childhood Advisory Council (ECAC), and the statutorily required tribal consultation meetings at DCF and DHS.
- d. A presentation was made on February 25, 2014, to ECAC to provide information that helped promote the ECAC's interest in addressing the achievement gap as well as in culturally relevant professional development.

5) Provision of mini-grants to each tribal nation:

- a. RTT funds provided \$191,107 to eight tribal nations. These grants supported internal community coordination, implementation of state professional development projects, and a number of tribe-specific program activities in areas such as teaching of tribal language, fatherhood, trauma informed care (Bad River), Wisconsin Model Early Learning Standards and Pyramid Model training, Child Find and developmental screening, curriculum/assessment system purchase and training, and safe sleep survival kits.

6) Increase tribal nation participation in state and project professional development priorities:

- a. More tribal nations' members participated in state and project professional development training, including early literacy, Wisconsin Model Early Learning Standards, the Pyramid Model for Social and Emotional Competence, developmental screening, and trauma informed care.
- b. Two existing state training packages were modified to ensure they were reflective of tribal cultures.
- c. Five tribal members became trainers in Wisconsin Model Early Learning Standards.
- d. Ten tribal nations were approved to implement Ages and Stages Developmental Screening in their community and have begun to implement community screening efforts.
- e. Three tribal members participated in "train the trainers" for trauma informed care.

Sustainability

The RTT-ELC Tribal-State Relations Project built on existing efforts in Wisconsin. While the end of RTT-ELC will result in a loss of funding to support a full-time coordinator at GLITC, mini-grants to fund local efforts, and supplemental funds for the Early Childhood Tribal Workgroup, there are a number of ways that this work will be sustained:

- The Disproportionality Technical Assistance Network will continue to fund the culturally responsive Early Childhood Tribal Project coordinator position. This position will help to support ongoing early childhood tribal activities and meetings locally and statewide.
- The GLITC-DCF home visiting project will allow continued partnerships and collaboration on the work of cross-sector early childhood efforts. GLITC continues to seek additional grants that would support services to young children and their families and support collaborative structures.
- Communication will continue through the DPI listserv and the braided funding website, <http://www.collaboratingpartners.com>.
- Wisconsin Model Early Learning Standards, Pyramid Model training, and comprehensive screening and assessment will be incorporated into the state structure for professional development and implementation continued through the individual tribes with trainers.
- The three state departments and related associations have committed staff time to continuing the communication structure, which is being redesigned to reduce the number of meetings and travel time.
- The ECAC will continue to be informed of the status of early childhood issues in tribal communities and support efforts to close the achievement gap.
- It is anticipated that early childhood topics will continue to be part of the Wisconsin Indian Education Association (WIEA) conference, which will bring issues to the larger tribal education community.
- Tribal nations will continue to utilize their increased knowledge of early childhood, and community connections and structures to implement practices that will support positive outcomes for young children and families.

This work has helped bring everyone to the table at all economic and cultural levels—poor, middle class, wealthy—to discuss problems and consider policy and procedures to promote improved services to young tribal children and their families.



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