

Early Childhood Investment Corporation
FY2009 Work Plan
For GSCs 12/10/08



Executive Summary

The time for deliberate, expedient and strategic action on behalf of our youngest children is now. With less than 2.5 years remaining in Governor Granholm's last term in office, the future of the *Great Start* initiative hangs in the balance.

To realize the promise of *Great Start* – all children in Michigan arriving at the kindergarten door safe, healthy, eager and ready for success – the Early Childhood Investment Corporation (ECIC) and the Great Start Collaboratives (GSCs) must achieve their goal of serving as the “focal point” for the development and implementation of the many facets of Great Start initiative. A dedicated, state funding stream which anchors these governance structures into perpetuity is essential to achieving this goal. With continuing state budget woes, gaining this funding stream will be a difficult task requiring effective leadership from the Corporate Board, Executive Committee, External Board Advisory Committees, Great Start Collaboratives and Great Start Parent Coalitions. Key in this effort will be stakeholders not yet evident in sufficient numbers to act as a force for change at the ECIC or GSC table, e.g. corporate business leaders, small business owners, foundation presidents, faith leaders, media and elected officials.

With such a comprehensive agenda for reform and innovation, holding a steely focus on our ECIC program goals will be essential. This is the year in which an evaluation design must be created and implemented for the ECIC and GSCs. We must have reliable evidence of our respective successes to educate and persuade key stakeholders and policy-makers regarding the need for increased investment and reform.

We have no doubt that FY09 will be a determinant and critical year for assuring the success of the Great Start initiative. What follows is a brief summary of FY08 accomplishment, a view of the anticipated environment in which early childhood efforts will navigate next year, along with a number of strategic assumptions that will guide our work. Proposed ECIC activities for FY09 are broken into our organizational areas of focus with a long-range goal and high level benchmarks identified for each area.

Accomplishments

The past year was one of tremendous progress and success for the Early Childhood Investment Corporation, the Great Start Collaboratives and the Great Start Parent Coalitions.

Accomplishments of particular note include:

- The Michigan Legislature recently approved sufficient funds to expand the Great Start Collaboratives and Great Start Parent Coalitions state-wide in fiscal year 2009. This achievement, in light of Michigan's ongoing economic difficulties and the many competing priorities for ever decreasing state funds, is a testament to the increasing influence of the ECIC and its Great Start Collaboratives.
- *Cosmic Collaboration*, a celebratory event that kicked off our fiscal year, where Governor's Granholm from Michigan and Hunt from North Carolina offered congratulations, recognition and a call to action to key early childhood stakeholders in Michigan.
- ECIC worked closely with Visions, Inc. to provide ongoing training, support and assistance on building an inclusive and multi-cultural workplace/workforce to its Executive Committee, staff and initial 21 Great Start Collaboratives.
- The first, annual *Michigan Early Childhood Challenge* brought together over 150 stakeholders representing (business, health care, state and local government, United Way, Head Start, state early childhood associations, parents, media, etc.) to determine Michigan's first, state-wide, consensus early childhood policy agenda. The Challenge was collaboratively funded by a National Governor's Association (NGA)

Policy Summit grant, the Michigan Association of United Ways, ECIC and the MI Head Start State Collaboration Office. ECIC achieved a planned outcome from the Challenge when the Governor's Executive Budget for FY09 addressed the top two policy priorities from the *Challenge*, e.g., 1. Improving the quality of child care in all settings, and 2. Increasing access to preschool, beginning with children most at-risk.

- The ECIC External Board Advisory Committees, under the able leadership of the ECIC Strategic Planning Committee, have set strategic priorities and multi-year benchmarks to assure rapid progress toward *Ready Kids 2020*. These Committees also hosted educational events for stakeholders and produced materials for the Great Start system.
- Eleven new Great Start Collaboratives (GSCs) and Great Start Parent Coalitions came on line in the spring of 2008 with funding provided through an additional \$750,000 appropriation from the Michigan legislature for FY08.
- The first 21 GSCs have completed their initial strategic plans, using a results-based, data-driven, community engagement process. \$3.0 million in private funds has already been raised to fund aspects of these plans.
- Local Great Start Parent Coalitions (GSPCs) are effectively advocating, educating and conducting outreach to parents of young children in the first 21 GSC communities. These parent-run and parent-driven entities sent hundreds of parents to the state capital for the second annual Star Power Event in May of 2008.
- Michigan was one of 13 states selected to participate in the first, National Symposium on Early Childhood Science and Policy (sponsored by National Governor's Association, the Harvard Center for the Developing Child and the National Conference of State Legislators). Michigan's team included the Presidents of the Detroit Regional Chamber and the Traverse Bay Regional Chamber, the President of the Steelcase Foundation and the Chief Operating Officer of the Governor's Office.

- ECIC sponsored *Children of Color Summits* will be held in eleven sites throughout the state in September. The information gained from these summits will be incorporated into all pertinent aspects of ECIC, GSC and GSCP work and will help to set the agenda for the Challenge 2008.

Our Environment

Excerpted with permission from Kids Count Report 2009.

Community Conditions for Michigan's Young Children and Families

Demographic trends between 2000 and 2006 show declines in the number of births in Michigan and the population of young children, a concentration of most minority populations, and worsening trends in child poverty and unemployment. Deteriorating economic conditions place enormous pressure on families as they struggle to meet the most basic needs. The unfolding crisis in housing and credit, while not reflected in any of the indicators included in this report, will further threaten family stability and well-being.

Fewer babies are being born.

Roughly 127,000 babies were born in Michigan in 2006—six percent fewer than in 2000. In 2006 the number of births in Michigan counties ranged from only 13 in Keweenaw to 27,400 in Wayne. Declining births will have significant impact on local communities. The number of births in Michigan peaked in 1990 at 153,000, and most children born that year would have graduated this spring. Under Proposal A, implemented in 1994–95, schools are funded based on per-pupil counts; in the 2008–09 school year, the average per-pupil foundation allowance was \$7,500.¹ Declining births will result in steady decreased school enrollments and shrinking revenue for local school districts.

The young child population is declining.

¹ Kathryn Summers-Cody, *Declining Enrollment: A Continuing Issue*. State Notes, Topics of Legislative Interest (May/June 2008). Senate Fiscal Agency. Lansing, Michigan.

Declining births to Michigan mothers result in decreasing numbers of young children in Michigan and its counties. In the first six years of the decade the young child population in Michigan declined by 5 percent. Almost all counties experienced declines, which were especially acute in the Upper Peninsula counties of Ontonagon, Gogebic and Schoolcraft. The only counties with more than 5 percent growth in child population were Isabella and Oceana.

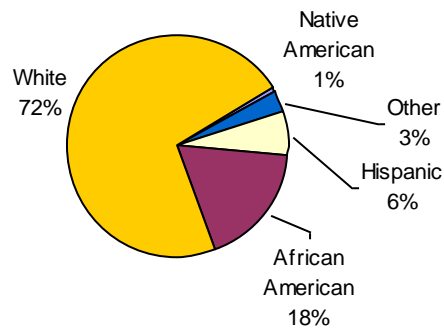
Most of Michigan’s racial minorities are concentrated in a few counties.

Almost three of four young children ages 0–5 in Michigan are white non–Hispanic. In 51 of the state’s 83 counties, at least 90 percent of children are white non–Hispanic, and within many counties with diverse racial/ethnic groups, minorities are concentrated, often in the major city. In the state as a whole, one of four young children is a racial or ethnic minority. The roughly 140,000 African American young children represented the largest (18%) minority population, and were heavily concentrated in a handful of counties. The majority live in Wayne County, and another one–quarter live in three more counties—Oakland, Genesee and Kent.

Young Hispanic children represent 6 percent of all young children, and are the second largest minority population. Their numbers are more dispersed with only one–quarter of the roughly 48,000 Hispanic young children living in Wayne County, and another third in the counties of Kent, Oakland, Ottawa or Macomb.

In 2006 the roughly 3,000 young children identified as American Indian represented only one–half of one percent of all young children in the state. According to population estimates based on birth certificates, their numbers dropped by over one–third between 2000 and 2006. This decline primarily results from the different ways the Census and the birth certificates collect data on race/ethnicity.

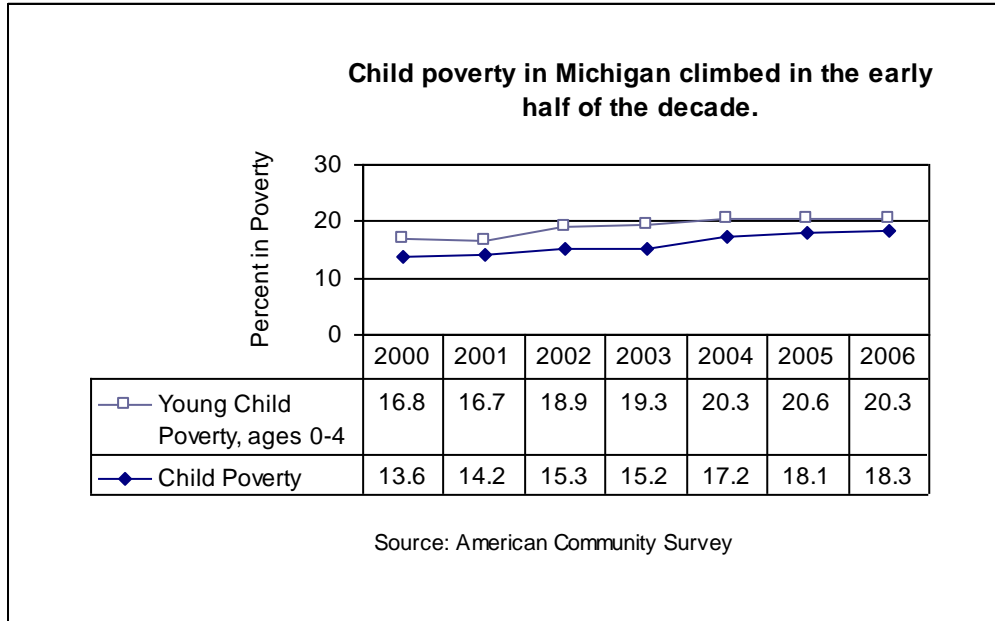
Roughly three of four young children in Michigan are white non-Hispanic.



Poverty afflicts one of five young children in Michigan.

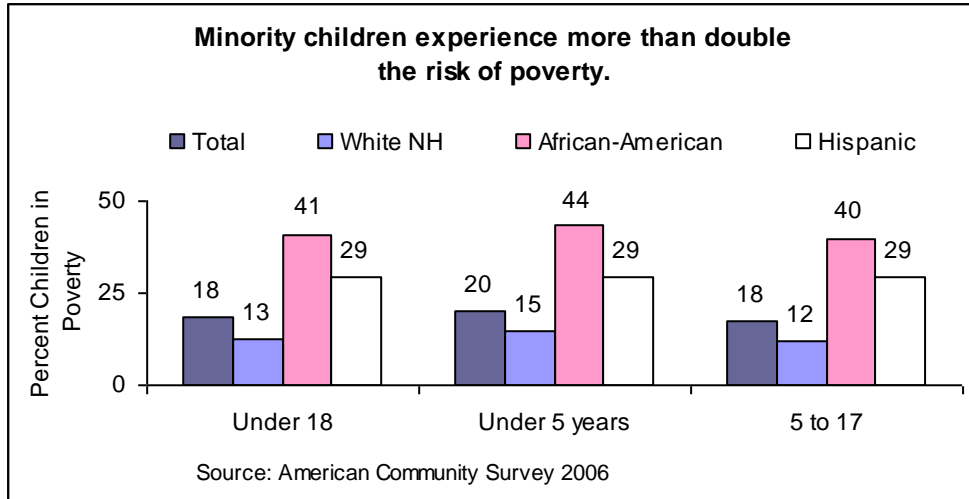
Since the beginning of the decade child poverty has steadily worsened in Michigan. Between 2000 and 2006 child poverty rose from 14 percent to 18 percent of children under age 18. Families with income below the federal poverty level (\$20,400 for a two-parent family of four in 2006) do not have the financial resources to meet their basic needs for shelter, food, transportation, or out-of-pocket health expenses. Calculations of the income for Michigan families needed to cover minimal basic needs without having to turn to any public family support program require an amount more than double the poverty level.² (This calculation does not include any savings for emergencies, education or retirement.)

² Self-Sufficiency Report. Michigan League for Human Services.

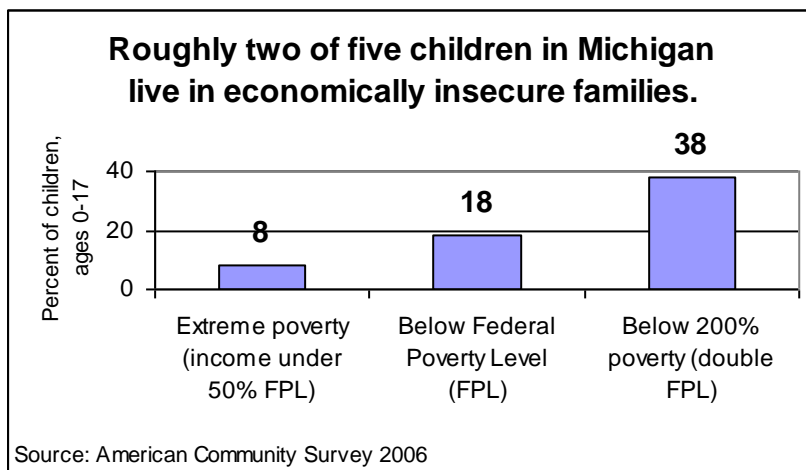


Poverty among young children ages 0–4 was even more acute with poverty rates consistently two or three percentage points higher than the overall child poverty rate. Parents of young children tend to be younger themselves and have less education and experience than parents of older children so their earnings are lower. Poverty in early childhood has particularly devastating consequences because physical development is so intense and rapid during this period. Young children are also much more susceptible to parental stress and mood, which are aggravated by financial hardship.

The risk of poverty also afflicts children of color disproportionately. Young African American children in Michigan were three times more likely to be living in a family with income below the federal poverty level than their white counterparts. Almost half (44%) of the state’s young African American children and 29 percent of Hispanic children lived in poverty compared to 15 percent of white non-Hispanic children.



Poverty rates grossly underestimate the number of children in economically fragile families. The federal poverty rate was developed in the 1960s when the living standard was very different. In 1959 the federal poverty rate reflected roughly half of the median income; by 2005 it had fallen to 28 percent. Although the federal poverty level is adjusted annually for inflation, it does not take into account the cost of working such as transportation and child care, nor the full impact of the rising costs of housing, insurance, medical expenses, and fuel.



Researchers and policy makers have acknowledged that even at 200 percent of the federal poverty level or double the federal poverty income; families would still struggle to meet the cost of basic needs. Almost all government

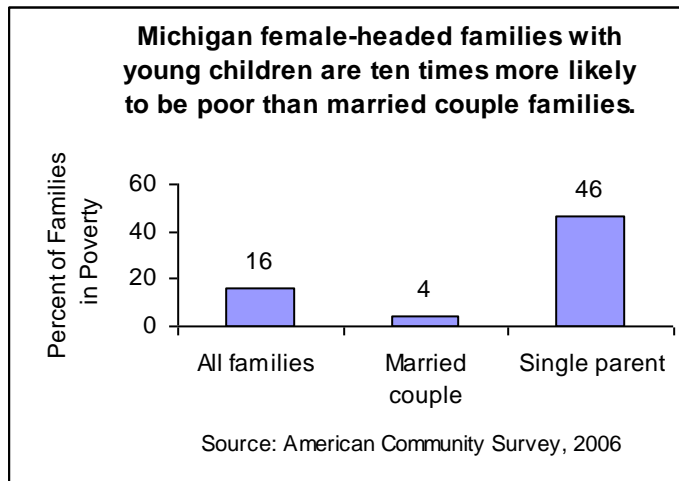
nutrition and health programs establish eligibility at income amounts above the poverty level. For example, families are eligible for the federal Supplemental Nutrition Assistance Program (formerly known as “food stamps”) at income below 130 percent of the poverty level or \$21,115 for a single parent family of three, and children in families with income under 200 percent of the poverty level can qualify for the public health insurance program MIChild.

One of three Michigan children lives in a single parent family.

Studies show that the majority of American children spend some part of their growing up years with a single parent. At any given point in time almost one-third of the state’s children live in a single parent family. This rate remained stable between 2000 and 2006. Michigan’s rate matches the national and Great Lakes state averages, but is substantially above the 25 percent level of Great Lakes neighbor state Minnesota.

Children in single parent families, usually headed by mothers, are more likely to be economically insecure, as well as stressed by more limited access to adult support and supervision. In the current economy the task of supporting a family on the income of one adult, especially a woman, poses a huge challenge. In most married couple families with young children in Michigan both parents work. Michigan women working full-time full-year earn only 76 percent of the income of their male counterparts, compared to a national average of 81 percent for women.³ Motherhood has profound implications on earnings for single women, who earn 13 percent less than their married counterparts. In 2006 single mother families with young children had a poverty rate of 46 percent compared to 4 percent among their married couple counterparts. As previously noted, young children are particularly affected by poverty conditions as the basic architecture of their physical and cognitive development is being established during this period. The kind of deprivation represented by poverty compromises their lifelong potential.

³ U.S. Department of Labor, U.S. Bureau of Labor Statistics. *Highlights of Women’s Earnings in 2006*. Report 1000. September 2007.



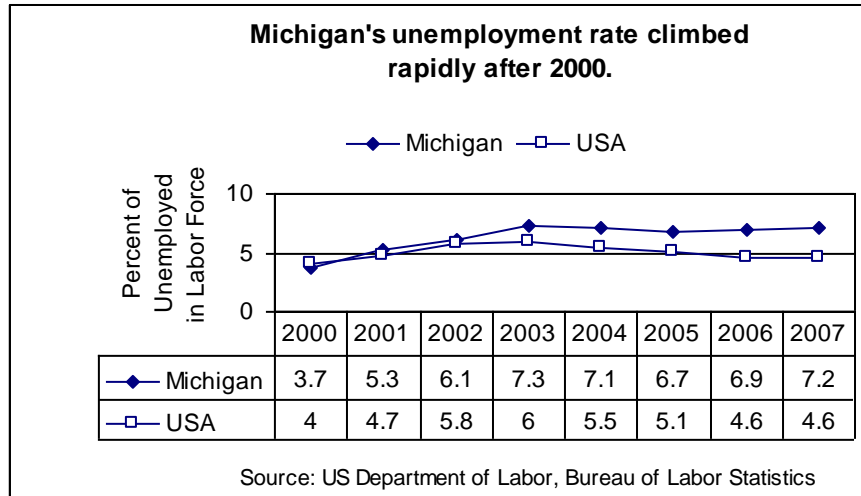
Michigan’s older housing stock can threaten the health of young children.

More than one in four housing units in the state was built before 1950. The Upper Peninsula counties of Keweenaw, Houghton and Gogebic and the city of Detroit have the largest concentrations of older housing in the state with over half their units having been built before the middle of the last century. Housing of this vintage has a greater likelihood of containing lead-based paint. If the windows are original or the house has been minimally maintained, lead dust and chips likely contaminate the living space, threatening the health of children, particularly the very young and the unborn. Their developing neurosystems are especially vulnerable to the impact of lead. The effects of lead on behavior and cognitive development severely compromise a child’s ability to learn. Poverty compounds the risk of lead exposure because children whose diets lack adequate calcium and iron absorb lead more readily.

Michigan’s unemployment rate almost doubled between 2000 and 2007.

Michigan’s economic woes threaten the well-being of children as their parents struggle to find or keep their jobs. In 2000 Michigan’s unemployment rate was 3.7 percent; by 2007 it had almost doubled to 7.2 percent, substantially above the national average of 4.6 percent. Unemployment rates ranged from 4.8 in Washtenaw to 13 percent in Montmorency. Every Michigan county sustained a substantial increase in the

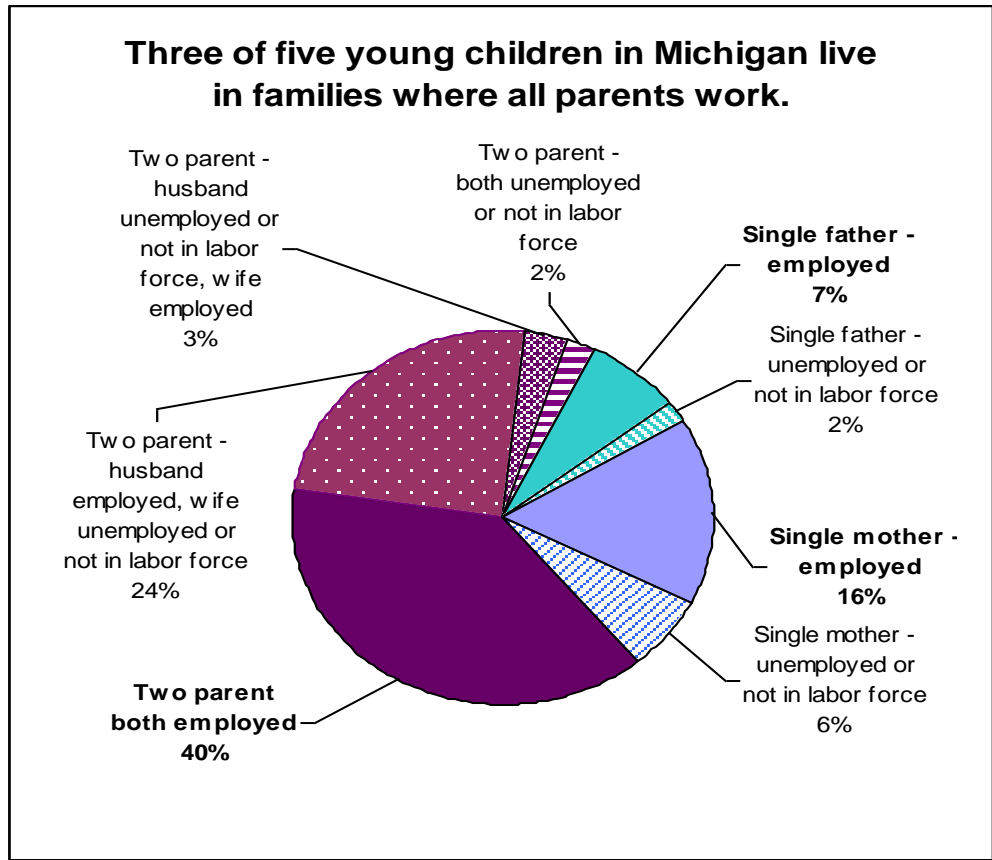
percent of workers who could not find jobs. The most recent data show this dire situation worsening in 2008 when the state unemployment rate climbed to 8.5 percent.



In 2006 median household income in Michigan dropped below the national average. The median income ranged from a high of almost \$72,000 in Livingston County (well ahead of the second highest \$64,000 in Oakland County) down to \$27,000 in Lake County. Not surprising many indicators of child well-being in these two counties reflect similar patterns.

In most Michigan families with young children all parents in the household are employed.

Despite the weakened economy, in over 60 percent of Michigan families with young children all parents (both or the single parent) were employed in 2006, according to findings from the American Community Survey. Most of these families will require care for their young children from someone other than a parent. Only one-quarter of Michigan’s families with young children reflects the “traditional” two-parent family with a stay-at-home mother and only the husband employed.



More Michigan families struggle to afford housing.

Between 2003 and 2006 the share of Michigan families paying more than 30 percent of their income for housing rose substantially for both renters and homeowners with a mortgage payment. (Housing expenses that exceed 30 percent of gross income are not considered “affordable”.) By 2006, almost half of Michigan renters, predominantly low-income households, and over one-third of homeowners were living in “unaffordable” housing. Given the skyrocketing costs of housing and falling wages over the last several years, this situation is not surprising, but nonetheless very troubling. As more families must pay larger shares of their income to housing costs, other portions of the household budget must be pared.

The Changing Face of Our Policy World

It is a reality that the status of Michigan's state budget drives a good share of our policy direction – both in terms of priorities, as well as, opportunities. ECIC needs be both opportunistic as well as planful to take the greatest advantage of this reality.

In the last year, ECIC made great strides in the creation of the local infrastructure for the Great Start system. There are now 32 Great Start Collaboratives (GSC's) up and running and 17 additional GSC's will be operational as of October 1, 2008. The remaining seven counties will come on board as of April 1, 2009. These counties will require individualized, substantial assistance and support to pull together the information that would normally be convened to ECIC through an application. The goal since ECIC's inception was to have statewide coverage by the year 2010. ECIC will meet that goal, no later than 2009. We have accomplished a lot, but there is much more to do.

To that end, it is imperative that we continue our efforts to educate legislators through advocacy and communication on the importance of early childhood investment and reform. At the state and federal level, the political climate in which we work will go through some drastic changes over the coming year. The Presidential Election, as well as, the State House races will affect our ability to communicate the need for support for early childhood programs. We must address these changes with an aggressive advocacy and communications plan that will keep early childhood programs a priority on both the state and federal level.

The Great Start system needs to be a front and center issue for every state and federal candidate. It is our job, working in partnership with the advocacy community, to make sure that candidates are educated and dedicated to making progress on the our agenda. Early childhood issues cross many policy areas including: health and nutrition programs; social and emotional health; parenting support and education; economic assistance and strong economic policies to help create strong stable families; high quality and affordable child care, as well as, access to universal pre-school.

There is at least one issue in early childhood for legislators of all perspective and political persuasions, and its ECIC's job to find out what that is and to match those legislators with the Great Start agenda.

Early Childhood Partners

Much change is afoot in the broader early childhood community in Michigan. Seven key positions either are or have changed hands, many for the first time in over 20 years. Those positions include:

- Mark Sullivan retiring as the Executive Director for Michigan 4C Association.
- Paul Shaheen retiring as the Executive Director for the Michigan Council for Maternal and Child Health.
- Ann Marsden retiring as the President of the Michigan League for Human Services.
- Nancy Willyard retiring as the Director of the Head Start State Collaboration Office.
- Sharon Peters retiring as the President of Michigan's Children.
- Richard Lower leaving his position as Director of the Michigan Head Start Association.
- Jeremy Reuter leaving his position as the Director of the TEACH program at Michigan 4C Association.

With these changes come opportunity for greater collaboration and alignment regarding a shared early childhood policy and funding agenda.

ECIC Leadership staff is currently engaged in a series of meetings with key state department and division directors to gain their support and engagement in our communications efforts. The state departments on the priority list include: the Department of Education, the Department of Human Services, the Department of Community Health, the Department of Labor and Economic Growth, the Department of Corrections and the Michigan Economic Development Corporation. These meetings began in July of 2008 and to date have been very successful in getting the support of these Directors and their participation in our overall efforts. To achieve our

mission ECIC must gain the cooperation and commitment of these stakeholders in delivering the message on early childhood.

Strengths/Opportunities

- The funding that the Legislature made available for the expansion of Great Start Collaboratives will free up Child Care Development Block grant funds that could be utilized to accomplish strategic priorities.
- By the end of FY 2009, a Great Start Collaborative and Great Start Parent Coalition will be convened in every Intermediate School District. The local Great Start infrastructure now exists to enact state-wide reforms and innovations.
- Governor Granholm has 2.5 more years in office and needs a “legacy” issue, a dedicated funding source for early childhood could offer such a legacy.
- Forty seven of 110 legislators will come into office in January of 2009, ECIC, the GSCs and the GSPCs can educate and gain commitments about early childhood investment at multiple points post the primaries.
- ECIC has time on every Governor’s Children’s Cabinet agenda and is engaging each Director and his/her key leadership in determining how ECIC and state government can forge a common early childhood agenda for the Governor’s remaining time in office.
- The Department of Human Services is in the midst of at least two, top to bottom redesigns – one for child welfare and one for the child day care (federal child care subsidy) program. ECIC is at the table for both of these efforts.
- Leadership roles at many key childhood membership and advocacy organizations are changing hands, bringing the possibility of new approaches to complex problems and great alignment of efforts.
- ECIC sponsored *Children of Color Summits* will bring a welcome diversity of new leaders into state and local level ECIC initiatives.
- At least 35 organizations engaged in parallel efforts around medical homes will join together in February for an ECIC sponsored summit on pediatric medical homes for all children.

- The development of Michigan’s first early childhood strategic financing plan, based on the strategic priorities of the ECIC and its External Board Advisory Committees, this plan will finally quantify what investment is needed to assure Ready Kids 2020.
- ECIC Corporate Board is almost completed in terms of its ISD membership but remains an untested entity in terms of how it acts as a body to support increase early childhood investment and reform.
- ECIC is re-launching a more interactive, information rich website and bringing a dedicated Communications Director on board to promote more effective internal and external communication.
- The creation of a regionalized system for the provision of technical assistance, consultation and support for Great Start Collaboratives and Great Start Parent Coalitions.
- Local and state business leaders are starting to “get” the early childhood investment message.
- ECIC is building our its staff to include a larger contingent of staff members with component specific expertise that will position us well to address the challenges that lie ahead in the component specific work.

Weakness/Threats

- The Governor who created the Great Start initiative and ECIC leaves office in 2.5 years.
- Legislature is term limited and the coming elections may result in a loss of legislators who currently support early childhood.
- The state is experiencing ongoing, and worsening fiscal constraints.
- There are diminishing state and federal funds for existing early childhood programs, making investment in infrastructure (ECIC and GSCs) seem of less importance.
- There is an absence of sufficient diversity at the leadership tables of ECIC and GSCs, increasing cynicism regarding our vision and values by those we most need to engage in our reform agenda.
- Child well-being is slipping faster than new resources are coming into play.

- ECIC and GSCs are in midst of tremendous growth spurt, there is a danger that expectations won't match reality. With more funding comes expectation for more visible outcomes.
- ECIC must maintain its strategic focus or it may "win" in one component area but not develop a comprehensive system.
- The complexity and inter-connectedness of problems in publicly funded child care and early childhood mental health, in particular, means incremental change takes on new meaning.
- State government leadership at multiple levels is overwhelmed and under resourced, with a mission much broader than addressing the needs of young children and their parents.
- The Great Start message is not reaching the public on a broad enough scale.
- The crucial importance of parent leadership, advocacy, and support for the Great Start initiative is not well understood, by too many.
- In order not to create legacy costs, ECIC is bringing some key staff on board as contractors and it is unclear currently if this will be a long-term workable strategy given their scopes of work.
- As an organizational entity, ECIC is still determining how it most efficiently designs its work location and operating style so as to keep its administrative costs as low as possible.

Strategic Assumptions for the Coming Year

- There will be a new administration in Washington, DC, putting its own spin on the relative importance of early childhood investment.
- The Michigan Legislature will be asked to fully fund the Great Start Collaboratives and Great Start Parent Coalitions.
- The information, knowledge and relationships gained from the *Children of Color Summits* will be incorporated into ECIC, GSC and GSPC decision-making tables.
- *The Great Start message* will be delivered state-wide, through multiple media.
- The *Great Start Blueprint Ver. 2009* will set a clear course for action for the achievement of *Ready Kids 2020*, including the "price tag" to deliver on that promise.

- The ECIC Corporate Board will be completed and deliver on its promise to influence the business community and the legislature regarding early childhood investment.
- The ECIC External Board Advisory Committees, under the leadership of the ECIC Strategic Planning Committee, will become a knowledge force in each Great Start System component area.
- ECIC will continue to be seen as a national model for early childhood system building; gaining recognition through the award of grants and requests for presentations to educate other states.
- ECIC's partnerships with state government and early childhood stakeholders (advocacy and membership organizations) will result in more collective action on a shared early childhood policy agenda.
- ECIC and GSCs will continue to reap the benefits of assistance provided by relationships with national knowledge leaders, e.g. Build Initiative, Smart Start National Technical Assistance Center and Project Thrive at the National Center for Children in Poverty (NCCP).
- Business engagement efforts will coalesce into a business engagement strategy with state-wide impact.
- High quality will continue to be a mantra for child care across all settings; DHS and ECIC will continue to initiate reforms to increase quality in all publicly funded child care.
- The economic stability of families will continue to worsen; child poverty will continue to increase, negatively impacting overall child well-being.
- ECIC will complete its staff restructuring and begin to implement performance-based employee contracts.

Areas of Focus

ECIC has seven inter-related and overarching areas of focus which contribute in distinct but complimentary ways toward the achievement of the Great Start vision and results. Each of the sections that follow begins with one of these areas of work, and then presents the long-range goal that is to be achieved. The long-range goal is then followed by the objective for FY 2009, benchmarks for the work, some brief discussion of the overall effort,

and finally, the strategies which ECIC will undertake to achieve the FY 2009 objective(s).

1. Supporting the local Great Start System infrastructure.

Long-range goal: Parents of young children have access to a comprehensive and coordinated array of community-based, family-centered, culturally competent, high quality early childhood programs, services and supports.

09 Objective: ECIC provides high quality, effective and timely technical assistance, consultation and information to assure that each Great Start Collaborative and Great Start Parent Coalition successfully completes its Start-Up, Planning and Implementation Phase.

Benchmarks:

- *Phase IV GSCs meet performance measures in Start-Up Contract.*
- *Phase II and Phase III GSCs meet performance measures in Planning Contract.*
- *Phase I GSCs meet performance measures in Implementation Year II Contract.*
- *GSCs complete assessment of ECIC TA and findings are incorporated into TA plan for 2009.*

The experience of many states over the past decade has demonstrated that systemic change must be led from both the community and state levels. Improving outcomes for young children and their parents requires the combination of both high quality programs and a connecting, coordinated infrastructure that webs them together into a comprehensive system.

Great Start Collaboratives serve as the local infrastructure for governance, planning, investment, advocacy and innovation for the Great Start system. Great Start Collaboratives grapple on a daily basis with the difficult, complex but ultimately rewarding tasks of assessing the results of their current early childhood system building efforts, planning for systemic change and

implementing an effective local infrastructure. Their work is informed by the partners they engage, e.g. parents of young children, members of the faith and business community, local philanthropic organizations, community leaders and leaders of the local public agencies providing the majority of early childhood services in the community.

In January of 2006, Michigan had just seven Great Start Collaboratives (GSCs) and by September 30, 2009, it will have 56, and thus a state-wide system of local infrastructure for the Great Start system. With this expansion comes both great opportunity and great challenge. ECIC must quickly and effectively put both an expanded, as well as, regionalized structure in place to provide the assistance, consultation and support these GSCs will require to be successful. It is also fair to say that those collaboratives that will come on board in these last two phases of implementation are in need of more intensive and comprehensive support, if their applications (or lack thereof) are any indication of their readiness to put local infrastructure in place.

Over the past 2.5 years intensive work has taken place within the Technical Assistance office to create the templates, policies, contracts, procedures, processes and guidance that now form the framework for supporting GSC work. ECIC's new Technical Assistance team will draw on this framework and with the establishment of the regionalized system, continue to evolve and improve this work to best meet the needs of our partners.

A key technical assistance focus for the ECIC in the coming year is assuring diverse and meaningful parent engagement and leadership both on the GSC, as well as, in the GSPC. One of our challenges is to move the GSCs beyond just meeting the performance measure of having 20% of their total membership being parents, to an in-depth understanding of the unique and powerful expertise that parents bring to the systems change efforts. The other is to significantly ramp up the training, assistance and support ECIC provides to the GSPCs so that their incredible potential to impact policy-makers and legislators is realized.

09 Strategies:

- Implement a regionalized technical assistance, consultation and peer-to-peer learning system to serve the 56 Great Start Collaboratives and Great Start Parent Coalitions.
- Refine and improve communication structures for knowledge and information sharing, peer-to-peer connection and mentoring among the 56 Great Start Collaborative Directors/Coordinators and Great Start Parent Coalition Parent Liaisons.
- Investigate, procure and implement technologies to support distance learning and communication amongst the 56 Great Start Collaboratives and Great Start Parent Coalitions.
- Develop an effective team of Great Start Collaborative and Great Start Parent Coalition Technical Assistance Consultants who effectively serve the Great Start Collaboratives and Great Start Parent Coalitions in their region.
- Continue to create and publish guidance documents and resource materials that support Great Start Collaboratives and Great Start Parent Coalitions to achieve ECIC Performance Measures.
- Implement procedures that assure the timely assessment of progress and reimbursement for each Great Start Collaborative.
- Develop and implement a monitoring and improvement system for Great Start Collaborative and Great Start Parent Coalitions who consistently do not meet performance measures.
- Complete a funding analysis to determine appropriate and adequate levels of funding for the scope of work of GSCs and GSPCs.
- Promote Great Start Collaborative and Great Start Parent Coalition successes within Michigan and nationally via the ECIC website, and through presentations to stakeholder groups at meetings and/or conferences.

2. Advancing Great Start System results.

Long-range goal: Michigan has a comprehensive and coordinated array of evidenced-based early childhood programs, supports and services with sufficient capacity to achieve the Great Start system results.

09 Objective: State department leaders understand the Great Start Initiative, champion it to their field/local organizations, and take action on their portions of the Great Start System Blueprint.

Benchmarks:

- *ECIC is the “go to place” for resources and information on early childhood.*
- *Michigan receives three-year ECCS grant award.*
- *Great Start Blueprint ver. 2009 is completed and disseminated.*

The original Great Start Blueprint was presented to the Governor’s Children’s Cabinet in October of 2004. While the plan was comprehensive, it was missing some key elements to support its effective and timely implementation, e.g. benchmarks of progress and financing strategies were of particular concern. In spite of those weaknesses, many pieces of the plan, especially those related to ECIC and GSCs, have seen tremendous success, unanticipated success even, with the state-wide funding for GSCs now in place. There has been tremendous work over the last 18 months to carry out a refinement and revision of the *Blueprint* and the External Board Advisory Committees, under the able leadership of the ECIC Strategic Planning Committee, have played a key role in the effort. The Strategic Planning Committee approved a calendar of work for this coming year which will have the *Great Start Blueprint ver. 2009* complete in early 2009.

ECIC recently brought on board three component specialist staff and re-assigned one additional current ECIC staff member to carry out a portion of the component specialist staff role. These staff leaders are experts in the

component areas and also bring a wealth of experience and expertise in planning, policy and group facilitation to their roles with the External Board Advisory Committees. Each of the committees has set strategic priorities, laid out benchmarks for those priorities and is in the process of developing strategies that will assure that each of the benchmarks is achieved and purposeful progress is made toward the priorities.

The *Great Start Blueprint* is a plan for the Great Start initiative and not for ECIC. Successfully implementing the *Blueprint* will require effective, collaborative relationships between ECIC and each of the state agencies represented on the Governor's Children's Cabinet. ECIC presents on its current work at each of the Children's Cabinet meetings. Additionally, ECIC has begun what will be a series of meetings with each of these state department directors and key leadership staff to determine an agenda for – communication about Great Start at the state and local levels and early childhood policy, financing and program reform. Finally, ECIC will be establishing an additional state government discussion group for early childhood program leadership to discuss concerns/needs on which collaborative work makes sense.

09 Strategies:

- Create a web-based, information clearinghouse that provides access to an inclusive library of resources (e.g. seminal documents, national web sites, state and national expert consultants, etc.) for each component area of the system.
- Coordinate and staff the completion of the *Great Start System Blueprint ver. 2009*.
- Gain a new 3-year award for the Early Childhood Comprehensive System (ECCS) grant from the Federal Bureau of Maternal and Child Health.

- Develop and supervise an effective team of Component Specialists who lead the completion of the scope of work for each of the External Board Advisory Committees.
- Continue to strengthen relationships, build common ground and take collective action on early childhood issues with state government and the early childhood advocacy community.
- Collaborate with the Head Start State Collaboration Office on early education issues to assure alignment of effort.

3. Increasing knowledge through early childhood research.

Long-range goal: ECIC has a core of research-based knowledge with which it can advocate, educate and communicate.

09 Objective: At the Early Childhood Challenge 2010, ECIC is able to report to the public on the status of young children as they enter kindergarten, from a representative sample of school districts.

Benchmarks:

- *Reports referenced below are completed and issued key opinion leaders at state and local levels.*
- *One elementary school in each GSC area is in Ready Schools pilot.*

ECIC was designed to be a knowledge generator and knowledge leader on all issues pertinent to the implementation of the Great Start system. Without actionable research-based knowledge ECIC cannot educate the public, advance policy or increase investment. The focus in this coming year is gaining the data necessary to quantify the scope of the problem MI faces with kindergarten readiness. National statistics would lead us to believe that about 20% of children have serious health, development, learning or behavioral issues that will dramatically impact their school readiness. Another 30% or so have one or more delays in the development, readiness for learning, or behavior that will make being successful in kindergarten more of a challenge. But the reality is that we do not know what the data

currently is for MI and without such data, we are guessing at where the priority ought to be placed for investment.

ECIC has seen the traction that other states have gained through public education and policy agendas that are informed by, and founded in, an economic rationale. ECIC will conduct the research necessary in the coming year to inform its public education and policy agenda for 2010.

The National Governor's Association (NGA) laid out in 2006 a policy framework for early childhood system building – one key component was *Ready Schools*. Ready schools is founded in the notion that “readiness” does not just rest with the family or the child but also with the education institution that the child is entering at the conclusion of their first five years. What we know is that gains made in the preschool years do not seem to persist as long as might be expected. Thus if schools made more of an effort to connect with the child, family and community in ways that support the gains made in the preschool years, the “fall off” in results from successful interventions made in the first five years might be positively impacted. ECIC will tie its Ready Schools initiative to the Great Start Collaboratives in the Implementation phase, both building and strengthening the connections between elementary schools and these focal points for early childhood across the state.

09 Strategies:

- Continue partnership with Kids Count grantee (Michigan League for Human Services) to assure that accurate, timely data on Great Start indicators is provided to each GSC and ECIC.
- Determine means, methods and mechanisms to produce kindergarten entry profiles on representative sample of children entering kindergarten.
- Determine economic contribution and impact of child care, across all settings.
- Determine means, methods and mechanisms to produce report on the economic cost of children arriving at Kindergarten insufficiently or unprepared for school success.

- Determine means, methods and mechanisms to produce report aimed at business and legislative communities on the economic development impact of early childhood investment.
- Support *Ready Schools* pilots in at least one elementary school in each of the Great Start Collaboratives currently in the Implementation Phase.

09 Objective: *Conduct research and develop the knowledge necessary to assure Child Care Development Fund (CCDF) quality funds are used in the most effective and efficient manner to improve the quality of publicly funded child care.*

Benchmarks:

- *Contracts are successfully awarded for child care quality improvement to highest qualified bidder(s).*

ECIC functions as the administrator for CCDF child care quality improvement contracts totaling more than \$12 million. In the coming year, ECIC must competitively bid nearly all of these resources, per state requirements. The necessity of a competitive bid presents the Great Start initiative an opportunity to thoroughly assess the current use of these funds and to determine how these funds can most effectively be deployed to achieve the strategic priorities and benchmarks detailed in the *Great Start System Blueprint ver. 2009*.

09 Strategies:

- Complete the analysis of how other states currently use CCDF quality dollars.
- Analyze report, prepared as a result of focus groups and a subsequent state-wise survey of child care providers (across all settings) and parents, as to findings which could positively impact child care quality.
- Assess DHS child care redesign plans to determine the implications for quality child care improvements in quality contracts.

- Prepare Request for Proposals for CCDF contract dollars that is based on the above research and designed to achieve strategic priorities and benchmarks specified in the *Great Start System Blueprint ver. 2009*.

4. Developing innovative early childhood policy.

Long-range goal: The gap between “what we know” from scientific early childhood research and “what we do” in early childhood policy is closed.

09 Objective: Explore options for educating the voters of the State of Michigan that support for a Great Start dedicated funding stream is critical to the development of a well-educated work force, will drive down the costs of K-12, lower the costs to corrections and put Michigan in a position to be an economic powerhouse once more.

Benchmarks:

- *FY10 budget includes full implementation funding for all 56 GSCs.*

In an effort to engage the Governor and Michigan Legislature in increased early childhood investment, ECIC will be holding a series of meetings with key members of the House, Senate and Executive Branch regarding an early childhood agenda for the legislature.

Each year, early childhood advocates from across the state descend on Lansing to educate lawmakers on the importance of early childhood investment. In these very difficult economic times, ECIC has, to date, been very successful in gathering the needed revenues to continue our mission. ECIC can be proud that it is currently in a financial position to provide start up funding for every GSC in Michigan. However, with the uncertain economic climate, the effect of term limits, and the change in Governor, we need to think more long term in our funding strategy.

Based on our commitment to early childhood programming and the need for a secured funding stream to carry on our work, ECIC will embark on a 2 ½

year process of communications, research and advocacy with the goal of successfully raising dollars through a funding issue dedicated to early childhood programs.

Months of planning and advocacy work will have to be completed to determine the viability of this effort. We must reach out to party leaders, elected leaders, advocacy and labor organizations, business groups and educational associations to convince them of the importance of this issue. It is critical that we have a clear understanding of our support system, as well as, any opposition prior to making a final decision about our path.

Over the coming months we will begin to implement our communications plan (referenced previously) as it relates to educating the legislative candidates and other associations on the importance of early childhood investment. Our key focus will be the economic savings derived from such investment. We will then determine from there, the proper course for further action.

09 Strategies:

- Plan and convene Michigan Early Childhood Challenge 2008.
- Monitor and act on federal policy proposal with potential to impact Great Start system.
- Focus and pursue a legislative early childhood policy agenda.
- Educate and inform GSC's and GSPC's about ECIC legislative policy work and the proposed Great Start funding initiative.
- Secure commitment for full funding to sustain every Great Start Collaborative and Great Start Parent Coalition at the implementation level.

5. Advancing public education and public will.

Long-range goal: A knowledgeable, mobilized and involved state citizenry ensures that the State of Michigan makes children among its highest

priorities and demonstrates that commitment through sustained public and private investment in early childhood programs and services.

09 Objective: *Build a strong, broad and diverse coalition of supporters for the Great Start Initiative who actively engage policy-makers, legislators and other key opinion leaders on a regular and ongoing basis.*

Benchmarks:

- *ECIC is implementing a strategic communications plan that includes a state-wide messaging campaign.*
- *Great Start Parent Coalitions in at least 49 of the GSCs (Phases I-III) are actively engaged in policy-maker education and advocacy.*
- *More legislators regard ECIC as “go to place” for information and resources on early childhood issues.*

Currently ECIC is working with a legislative policy advocacy list that takes into consideration the current committee chairs over those policy areas that deal with most of the issues affecting ECIC priorities.

The 2008 House Legislative races bring with them a minimum of 43 new members to the Michigan House. A total of 27 House Republican members and 16 House Democratic members will be leaving office after their third and final term. This means that we have a minimum of 43 members to educate on the importance of early childhood and continue our efforts with the members who are re-elected.

Just as we review the Presidential candidate’s positions on issues that are critical to the success of ECIC and its mission, we must also make an effort to ascertain the positions of the candidates in the House races. To that end, we will be requesting each of our 32 existing Great Start Collaboratives (GSC’s) to engage in a face-to-face discussion with the candidates in their respective State House races.

The purpose of these meetings will be to educate these candidates on the mission of ECIC and the Great Start system, the need to build capacity in

existing early childhood programming, the economic impacts of investment in early childhood, as well as, to share opportunities for their engagement in the Great Start agenda. Each candidate will be given a short survey aimed at determining their level of interest and commitment to early childhood issues. Those surveys will be sent back to the GSC's who will then share them with ECIC staff. We will compile this information and share it with the GSC's and the Executive Committee. We will use this survey information to determine what additional education/advocacy efforts are needed for each candidate.

In something as large and complex as building a comprehensive early childhood system, it is critically important to be strategic in engaging specific audiences. For each of the audiences that follow ECIC will first seek to educate, and then seek to engage and build relationships through ongoing education. Essential to that communication will be key research, special events or convening's, collateral materials and a unifying state-wide messaging campaign.

Primary Target Audiences

- Governor
- State Legislature
- Business community
- Media
- Local Elected Officials
- State Early Childhood Advocacy Groups
- Local Advocacy Groups
- Education Associations
- Parents

Secondary Target Audiences

- Congressional Leaders
- Labor organizations
- Political Party organizations
- Philanthropic Community
- Faith-Based Community

Finally ECIC is currently contemplating the creation of one or two more annual or semi-annual, state-wide events. These events would build on the success of Star Power or Cosmic Collaboration and offer greater opportunity for people from all walks of life and levels of interest or expertise to become engaged in the Great Start initiative. One event we currently are considering is a state-wide, annual day of “open doors” at exemplary early childhood programs so that many folks would have the opportunity to understand what the “it” is that we are aiming for when we talk about quality. Another event under consideration is a state-wide, fun day for young children and their parents, perhaps taking the form of a walk or a “play date in the park” where across the state, on the same day, everyone is engaging in early childhood learning. A key consideration will be how to fund these events, whether to attempt to use existing ECIC funds (taking them away from another purpose) or whether it makes sense to raise funds for these events at the state and local levels. Whatever we ultimately settle on we need to make sure that it shines a bright light on local communities and gives multiple opportunities to educate broadly, across many sectors of the community.

09 Strategies:

- Complete and compile research needed to successfully communicate Great Start message, including the development of key messages through polling.
- Create and execute an overall Great Start/ECIC communications plan (GSC’s, GSPCs, the Executive Committee, state early childhood advocacy groups and key elected officials would inform).
- Hire an in-house Communications Director, as well as, an outside consultant to complete communications plan.
- Serve as an information hub on early childhood issues for elected officials.
- Educate and inform Great Start Parent Coalitions on their role in early childhood advocacy and seek their assistance as a grass roots arm of our communications plan.

- Provide training for GSC's and Parent Coalitions on Great Start message, message delivery, dealing with the local media and elected officials and internal mobilization and communication.
- Develop candidate and legislative communication materials.
- Increased earned media.
- Create a Speaker's Bureau to carry our message statewide.
- Create a body of 15–20 individuals (One-on-One Teams) who are well versed on ECIC, Great Start and our mission that can be called on for immediate press response.
- Update current *Communications Tool-Kit* Model for use by GSC's, Parent Coalitions, our advocacy network and Executive Committee members.
- Brand the Great Start Initiative.
- Brand ECIC and the GSC's as early childhood research tools.
- Educate key elements of the business community on the return on early childhood investment and deploy them as champions for our investment agenda.

6. Increasing public and private investment.

Long-range goal: Permanent and adequate funding is in place to sustain both the infrastructure and programs of the Great Start system.

09 Objective: *Broaden the community of stakeholders, including Children/Communities of Color, Business, Education, Foundations, and Faith who have a solid understanding of the mission of ECIC and are committed to working as partners on strategies to improve early childhood programs and services in Michigan.*

Benchmarks:

- *Report from Children of Color Summits is broadly disseminated with attributable action being taken by ECIC and GSCs on its recommendations.*

A critical component of ECIC's strategy to increase investment involves broadening the network of stakeholders who understand the value and importance of the early years, and who will invest their own time and expertise as well as that of their constituencies in supporting the Great Start agenda. Through stronger ties with key constituent groups, ECIC will increase the perspectives from which early childhood messages are conveyed to opinion leaders and policy makers. Ultimately, a fully funded Great Start system will require both better uses of existing resources as well as new investments. To achieve those ends, however, a broader base of commitment and understanding of early childhood issues is fundamentally important.

09 Strategies:

- Conduct *Children of Color* summit sessions and disseminate/incorporate findings in all aspects of ECIC work.
- Convene leadership sessions with opinion leaders from the education, faith, business and foundation communities and engage these partners in efforts to educate policymakers on early childhood issues.
- Build communication linkages as a means to ensure the ongoing engagement of these critical stakeholders.

09 Objective: *Develop a strategic financing plan for the Great Start Blueprint ver. 2009 that will specify: gaps in programs and services; short and long term financing strategies; recommended redeployment of existing funding (as outlined in the Phase I report) and additional funding needed.*

Benchmarks:

- *Great Start Blueprint ver. 2009 incorporates a strategic financing plan.*

In September of 2007, the Finance Project completed its first phase of work with ECIC and delivered a report that analyzes funding from the perspective of the five components of the Great Start system (Physical Health, Social-Emotional Development, Early Care and Education, Basic Needs, Economic Stability and Child Safety, and Parenting Education and Family Support). The

report provided comprehensive information on the current status of funding, and set the stage for a second phase of work.

In the coming year, the Finance Project will support the Great Start Collaboratives and the External Board Advisory Committees in their efforts to align strategic priorities with financing strategies. The Finance Project will work with ECIC leadership to develop a strategic financing plan that will provide guidance and direction to ECIC and its partners on both short and long term plans which must be enacted to put adequate and sustainable funding in place for the Great Start system.

09 Strategies:

- Assist GSCs to assess how federal, state and local funding sources support elements of local Great Start system.
- Provide guidance to GSCs in incorporating financing findings into financing of their Great Start strategic plans.
- Plan and facilitate the work of the External Board Advisory Committees as they develop strategic financing strategies for the *Great Start System Blueprint ver. 2009*.
- Consolidate the financing strategies of each of External Board Advisory Committees into a strategic financing plan for the *Great Start System Blueprint ver. 2009*.

7. Continuously incorporating evaluation findings into all aspects of ECIC work.

Long-range goal: ECIC, Great Start Parent Coalitions, and Great Start Collaboratives utilize evaluation findings to continuously inform and improve means, methods, decisions, and approaches to their respective scopes of work.

09 Objective: ECIC begins implementation of a comprehensive organizational evaluation.

Benchmarks:

- *Theory of change is finalized for development and implementation of Great Start system and ECIC.*
- *Overall evaluation design is determined.*
- *Comprehensive organizational evaluation begins.*

Evaluation will play a significant role in our 2009 efforts. In addition to the Build evaluation that ECIC already is part of, we will be starting specific and focused evaluation on our Great Start Collaborative and Parent Coalition efforts. We believe we have made enough progress at this juncture to undertake a comprehensive organizational evaluation, however, we continue to talk with evaluation experts about how best to capture lessons learned from our overall work since our system component work of the board external advisory committees is just getting off the ground. We expect to have a better understanding of how our evaluation efforts will play out in 2009 by November.

09 Strategies:

- Secure evaluator for Build Initiative portion of ECIC work.
- Finalize theory of change for development and implementation of Great Start system and ECIC.
- Determine comprehensive evaluation approach.
- Oversee the development of a “Request for Proposals” for evaluation.
- Award RFP to highest qualified bidder.
- Oversee beginning stages of evaluation implementation by contractors/consultants.

Conclusion

This comprehensive and aggressive plan of work will be undergirded by strong governance reflected in solidifying ECIC’s staff structure, finalizing the transition of the startup accounting system to a stronger and streamlined internal accounting department that include customer focused contract administration and monitoring, better integration of areas of work, fully engaging a well-rounded Corporate Board, and identifying grant

opportunities to support innovation efforts between ECIC and our local GSCs.

Much has been accomplished and yet, the work before ECIC looms large. Challenges and opportunities notwithstanding, we will measure our progress at all times against our charge to coordinate and align early childhood efforts to achieve better results for all young children and their parents:

- Infants, young children and their families are physically healthy.
- Infants, young children and their families are socially and emotionally healthy.
- Families support and guide the early learning of their infants and toddlers.
- Families have access to high quality early care and education.
- Children are ready to succeed in school and in life.
- Families of infants and young children are economically stable.
- Infants and young children live in safe families.