

Community of Practice Facilitation Training

The Lastinger Center has been nationally recognized for its work implementing job-embedded professional development initiatives. We have learned that a strong Community of Practice approach (also known as professional learning communities) dramatically increases the impact of professional development initiatives through intentionally building the structures, conditions and processes so the content has greater impact toward achieving the intended goals. This approach aligns well with the design of the Georgia Department of Early Care and Learning's (DECAL) tiered professional development hierarchy, particularly the focus on Tier 3 – Professional Learning Communities.

Over the course of the partnership, we will assist Georgia DECAL in the design, build out, and field testing of a training process that will prepare early childhood educators to lead communities of practice among their peers. Ultimately, this collaboratively designed training process will include the following experiences for participants over 8-month period:

- **Communities of Practice Facilitator Institutes:** Participants attend two institutes: an intensive four-day professional development experience followed by a two-day follow-up institute later in the year. During the institutes, participants gain a conceptual and practical understanding of how to facilitate a community of practice as a form of job-embedded professional development.
- **Communities of Practice Facilitator Practicum Sessions:** Participants attend four, two-hour online support sessions over the course of the year, designed to assist them in applying and documenting their facilitation work in their respective early childhood contexts. During the practicum, individuals continue to hone their facilitation skills as members of a cohort-based community of practice.
- **Online Resource Center:** Participants utilize an online forum to upload documents for analysis and to download resources to use with colleagues. They gain access to an online platform that enhances participant learning and support cohort collaboration as an online community of practice.
- **Portfolio Documentation and Certification:** Participants document their development in an electronic portfolio, which can consist of written reflections, video clips, session reflections, and agendas. UF Lastinger staff review portfolios and provide feedback. At the end of this process, participants that demonstrate fidelity to the model are certified, according to a research-based rubric.
- **Learning Showcase:** The training process concludes with a collaboratively planned showcase, which allows the participants to exhibit the results of their professional learning publicly

Target Audience

During the first round of training, the Lastinger Center will work with Georgia DECAL to field test this training with two cohorts of up to 30 people each. The

second round of pilot training with three cohorts will allow for the further refinement of the training model. Participants should ideally be instructional leaders who will have the time and opportunity to plan and implement Community of Practice sessions within their daily work as teachers, directors, or technical assistance providers.

Capacity Building Approach

The Lastinger Center will build the capacity of Georgia facilitators to sustain Community of Practice training model after the completion of the Race to the Top Early Learning Challenge grant. Through its proven capacity building model, the Lastinger team leads the first year of training and follow up, selects strong facilitators from the first cohort to receive extra training, which prepares them to apprentice as co-facilitators who train the second cohort of participants in partnership with Lastinger staff in the second year of the partnership. After the second round of training is completed, the Lastinger team is available to these facilitators by phone and videoconference to help develop agendas, plan meetings, and address any concerns while they apprentice a new round of co-facilitators and train a third cohort of participants. In year 3 of the partnership we will help Georgia develop and implement its own certification process to ensure sustainability beyond the Race to the Top funding. Through this process, a capacity-building pipeline is established so that these Georgia-based trainers will then be prepared to train child care program staff (e.g., center directors, education coordinators), technical assistance consultants, and other leaders to facilitate communities of practice in child care programs statewide after the completion of the grant at the end of 2017. There will be no ongoing fees to the University of Florida necessary for DECAL to continue to offer this training within the State of Georgia upon completion of this agreement. Should DECAL desire ongoing support or additional capacity building after the conclusion of the work outlined in this proposal, this can be negotiated separately.

Outcomes

This Community of Practice training model will help accomplish DECAL's key goals:

- *Develop Community of Practice facilitator training to fulfill the Tier 3 Professional Learning Community portion of the Professional Development Hierarchy:* The training the Lastinger Center offers includes facilitation skills, reflective practice, principles of adult learning, supporting change initiatives, protocols to support collaborative learning and group participation, as well as building and managing a community of learners.
- *Field-test the training model with selected cadres of early childhood professionals.* We will deliver the training in five cohorts of up to 30 participants, selected by DECAL. These participants may include staff from DECAL, Child Care Resource & Referral agencies, and other early childhood

professionals selected through an application process. We can assist with the selection process as desired.

- *Support participants in the Community of Practice facilitation as they begin to organize sessions within childcare programs.* The Lastinger team will provide support to the participants in the facilitator training. This will include regularly scheduled practicum sessions conducted by videoconference as well as phone calls and other responsive support as needed by participants.
- *Utilize a rubric to help evaluate whether trained Community of Practice facilitators are implementing the model or protocols with integrity.* The Lastinger Center has already developed a research-based rubric for certifying participants' ability to design and lead job-embedded professional learning.
- *Co-create a Training of Trainers for the Facilitators:* As outlined above, the Lastinger model is one of capacity building and gradual release, with support at each step to ensure the facilitators are prepared to successfully lead COP facilitator training in the future.
- *Technology Platform:* The agreement includes a Learning Management System that offers a video annotation tool to allow for coaches to collaboratively examine and receive feedback on their coaching technique. At the conclusion of the agreement, DECAL has the ability to continue to contract with the technology provider at a nominal fee or to utilize a free collaboration space, such as Edmodo.
- *Measurable Impacts:* As part of this work we will partner with your evaluation team to develop appropriate measures of impact and document quantitative and qualitative evidence over time. We have successful rubrics for measuring impact that have been used for similar initiatives that we will help adapt for the work in Georgia to ensure they meet your needs.