Building Colorado’s Pyramid Network Hub

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Introduction

There is a deep history of national, state, and local level Pyramid work that has occurred in our state over the past 20 years. Over these past two decades there has been tremendous learning, innovation, and implementation occurring at all levels.

In 2019, the philanthropy community started to become more involved in focusing on the sustainability and expansion of the state-level Pyramid work. To ensure sustainability, a determination was made to move the state-level work from the University of Colorado Denver to a community-based nonprofit. In 2020, a request for proposals was released by the Buell Foundation to identify a community-based nonprofit. Healthy Child Care Colorado (HCCC), a well-established statewide nonprofit with a focus on social and emotional well-being, was awarded this role.

Healthy Child Care Colorado’s mission is to build safe, supportive, and healthy early childhood settings and systems where children and professionals learn and grow. HCCC has four priority areas they focus on:

1. Support the social-emotional development and inclusion of all children ages birth through five by promoting and expanding evidence-based Pyramid approaches.
2. Support the development of a strong Pyramid Model system and a Network Hub as it has been the cross-sector collaboration between government, nonprofit, higher education, and philanthropic organizations. We co-created the Network Hub by utilizing existing resources, collecting input from the field, and by collaborating with the Transition Team to develop key elements. The Foundations will serve as our guide for the next 5+ years and they include our purpose, guiding principles, desired outcomes, and core functions.
3. Engage and coordinate early childhood professionals with the Transition Team.
4. Ensure a lens of diversity, equity, and inclusion are at the center of our efforts, recognizing privilege and access to power, working to create inclusive systems and programs and dismantle a history of oppression.

Our intention for the transition was to co-create an inclusive, collaborative framework, that all children are valued, healthy and thriving. As we embarked on transitioning Pyramid to HCCC, Healthy Child Care Colorado’s mission is to build safe, supportive, and healthy early childhood settings and systems where children and professionals learn and grow. HCCC has four priority areas they focus on:

Process & Methods

The process to develop the Network Hub was guided by a sustainability framework. This framework was initially developed by the consultant through a review of literature on program and organizational development and sustainability. It was then fine-tuned over time through input with many organizations, programs, networks, and other collaborative groups to ensure comprehensive and grounded planning processes. Dedicating sufficient time and resources to strong foundations that guide strategic planning and implementation is essential.

We conducted various inquiry and engagement efforts to inform our efforts including: a landscape analysis, needs assessment, engagement process, stakeholder interviews, and a collaborative process with the Transition Team.

An important element of building a strong Pyramid Model system and a Network Hub has been the cross-sector collaboration between government, nonprofit, higher education, and philanthropic organizations. We co-created the Network Hub by utilizing existing resources, collecting input from the field, and by collaborating with the Transition Team to develop key elements. The Foundations will serve as our guide for the next 5+ years and they include our purpose, guiding principles, desired outcomes, and core functions.

Results

Since the transition, Healthy Child Care Colorado has been working to establish a Pyramid Network Hub to support and coordinate the Pyramid work in Colorado. The Network Hub was initially developed by the consultant through a review of literature on program and organizational development and sustainability. It was then fine-tuned over time through input with many organizations, programs, networks, and other collaborative groups to ensure comprehensive and grounded planning processes. Dedicating sufficient time and resources to strong foundations that guide strategic planning and implementation is essential.

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Objectives

1. Describe the approach, process, and methods used to effectively transition the state-level Pyramid work from a university to our nonprofit organization.
2. Recognize the importance of establishing foundational elements including purpose, guiding principles, values, desired results, and core functions for state-level Pyramid work.
3. Explain the concept and importance of a state-level Pyramid Network Hub that is focused on engagement and support, learning and implementation, and leadership and advocacy.

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Lessons Learned

1. Organizational Alignment. Honoring and leveraging HCCC’s history, values, structure, and functions put us on the road to success integrating the Pyramid Network Hub into the organization.
2. Clarity & Collaboration. Ensuring clarity of process and infuse authentic engagement opportunities throughout. This created trust and meaning for all, particularly those closest to the work and communities. A cross-sector Transition Team was critical.
4. Diversity, Equity, & Inclusion. Deep and intentional dialogue around DEI was required in our process to ensure clarity and commitment among the full Transition Team. It also set us up to ensure it is centered throughout the Pyramid Colorado Foundations.
5. Data Driven Decision-making. Collecting quantitative and qualitative data was essential for us to adequately assess and collectively make decisions. This was useful in the transition and will be crucial in sustainability and future decision-making.

Acknowledgements

Special thanks to the many stakeholders who helped ensure a stronger system and the establishment of our Pyramid Network Hub by engaging, stating your needs, and sharing your hopes.

The Transition Team, multiple Workgroups, and now our new State Leadership Team ensured and continue ensure, that we are building upon the relationships, partnerships, and systems efforts done over the past two decades with ongoing intention.

Purpose

Support the social-emotional development and inclusion of all children ages birth through five by promoting and expanding evidence-based Pyramid approaches.

Guiding Principles

- Focus on promotion and implementation of evidence-based practices and data-informed decisions that lead to fidelity of the model
  - Recognize connections, relationships, and partnerships as central to Pyramid efforts, emphasizing alignment and innovation between stakeholders at local, state, and national levels
  - Ensure a lens of diversity, equity, and inclusion are at the center of our efforts, recognizing privilege and access to power, working to create inclusive systems and programs and dismantle a history of oppression
  - Ensure responsible planning and stewardship of resources

Desired Outcome

- “Thank you for valuing the ideas and voices of people involved at varying levels of knowledge & commitment to Pyramid work within the state – and then implementing those ideas!”
  - “It has been a pleasure to work with all of you and an excellent investment of my time. Thank you for allowing me to take part, for listening to suggestions/concerns/wanderings—and to put some into action!”
  - “I appreciate the reflectiveness, intentionality, and careful process you go through as a team to move this along. It is brilliant. It is Pyramid and you have considered all the players.”

Year 1 & 2 Priorities

These priorities were identified as themes from the inquiry and engagement process and were formally established by the Transition Team.

Sustainability: Restructure the State Team; ensure sufficient involvement of implementers; foundations

Quality & Fidelity: Maintain Colorado’s certification process; revisit and refresh

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Meet the Leadership Team

The State Leadership Team collaborates to provide insight, context, expertise, and guidance to Healthy Child Care Colorado on matters of programming, research, opportunities, funding, and systems alignment. The team will ensure that Pyramid-related efforts maintain relevance, meaning, and utility in local, state, and national contexts. They will also support the creation of annual priorities, acting to ensure success.

Another key part of the leadership structure includes Workgroups, which are established on an annual and as-needed basis to align with the identified priorities and action plan. These groups are time limited and help HCCC and the State Leadership Team by looking closely at areas of opportunities or needs. They may also make recommendations to the State Leadership Team.