Implementation Development Map: Literature Review for Political Leadership

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Literature Review for Political Leadership (PL)

In this document, we summarize our literature review on the Political Leadership (PL) element of the Implementation Development Map (IDM). We start with an overview, then provide a bulleted list that summarizes the strength of support from the strength of support from professional/expert recommendations and the research literature, and we discuss whether the research speaks to equity. Following the detailed notes are two graphics that summarize, for each IDM indicator, the strength of (1) the research evidence and (2) the support from expert recommendations and professional best practices. The appendix describes our literature search and review process.

A. Overview

Political Leadership (PL) is one of seven elements in the Implementation Development Map (IDM). PL assesses the extent to which the political conditions in the state are conducive to moving state policy toward equitable and sustainable improvements in state pre-K programs. Political support from legislative and executive leaders, state agency actors, advocates, activists, and other grassroots stakeholders create the conditions that are needed for improving state pre-K programs. The PL element identifies and measures the extent to which the political conditions are present within the state. There are nine indicators in the PL element, and all nine are at the state level. The PL element thus focuses on the actions that political leaders can take at the state level to promote equitable access to high quality pre-K programs, including actions to gain legislative and gubernatorial support; establish state plans, budgets, and funding for pre-K; and build coalitions with early childhood advocates that represent diverse and authentic voices.

> **Definitions**
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> **Research Strength** is based on the number of case studies that examine the political factors that support progress toward strengthening the early childhood development system.[1]
>
> **Practice Strength** is based on whether the indicator is supported by professional best practices or expert recommendations.
>
> - Professional best practice standards include recommendations made by the BUILD Initiative.[2]
> - Expert recommendations are from the National Academy of Sciences, Engineering, and Mathematics (NASEM). ◢

At the request of the Bill & Melinda Gates Foundation, Mathematica conducted a systematic literature review focused on PL. (The full methodology appears in the appendix.) Because this element focuses on the political conditions that precipitate state policy changes, rather than state- or program-level practices or interventions, we adjusted our screening criteria to include case studies (see appendix). Case studies can thoroughly assess the events or conditions that unfolded to bring about a policy or assess the consequences of a policy.[3] We caution the reader, however, that findings from case studies should not be interpreted as causal evidence. Case studies cannot determine that a certain political condition improved policy or must always be present in order to achieve a certain outcome. (For instance, another factor may

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[1] We reviewed case studies rather than studies in which the outcomes can be attributed to an intervention (that is, a causal study or well-conducted correlational study) for the Political Leadership element because case study designs are well suited to understanding the conditions that bring about policy change.

[2] Because many of the professional recommendations that we used for the other IDM elements—such as HSPPS and NAEYC standards—do not speak to political leadership, we have extended the documents and resources we assessed to include resources that explicitly address political leadership and the role it plays in building state systems to support early childhood development.

[3] Case study designs included single case studies (those that examine only one state or city unit), multiple case study designs (those that examine several units), and comparative case study designs (those that compare and contrast multiple units).

have been more important in achieving the end result.) However, in the absence of causal research, case studies can show which political conditions were present (or absent) during a policy process and point us to lessons on what may have helped (or impeded) states and localities in passing or implementing policies to strengthen preschool systems.

For the PL element, after screening the studies collected for the literature review, we identified and reviewed five case studies published since 2001 to assess their quality and key findings (see References). The five studies support six of the IDM indicators. Despite the limited availability of high quality research, we caution readers against drawing conclusions about the inherent value of an IDM indicator. Readers should not conclude that a lack of high quality studies means the indicator does not have valuable, nuanced information to offer about how to strengthen state systems.

Given that the IDM is a tool designed to improve state systems, we also determined which elements and indicators were supported by professional best practice standards and expert recommendations. The PL element is a bit different from the other elements. Our assessment of the associated literature and the correspondent professional recommendations were also modified to reflect the spirit of this IDM element. Unlike other elements that referred to recommendations made by HSPPS and NAEYC, our assessment of practice strength for each indicator drew on documents produced by the BUILD Initiative.[4]

B. Details of support for indicators

In this section, we describe the strength of support that the indicators have from the research literature or the recommendations of professionals and experts. We detail themes or findings from the case studies that support the indicator. As a reminder, findings from case studies should be viewed as instructive lessons from which other states or localities may learn but should not be viewed as causal evidence in support of an indicator. If there are no studies related to an indicator (Figures 2 and 4), we do not discuss it.

IDM PL 1: State leaders directly in charge of the state pre-K program (e.g., the Early Learning Department or Office of Early Learning) develop and advance a strategic vision and plan focused on continuous quality improvement, compliance, and ensuring equitable outcomes for all children, including the following six components:

- **Vision and plan explicitly and meaningfully address equitable outcomes (e.g., might address equitable access, diversity of the workforce, anti-bias efforts, culturally sensitive and responsive practice).**

- **Plan includes providing robust supports for implementation including attention to leadership and job-embedded professional learning.**

- **Plan was informed by data includes measurable goals as well as measures to track progress.**

- **Strategic vision, goals, and activities are coherent and connect with other policies or efforts to improve early learning quality and outcomes in the state.**

- **There is a reasonable, evidence-based theory of change that connects the activities to the strategic plan goals and outcomes.**

- **Plans ensure sustainability of policies and practices.**

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[4] "The Nuts and Bolts of Building Early Childhood Systems Through State/Local Initiatives." BUILD Initiative: Strong Foundations for Our Youngest Children, January 2014.

Research strength:

- One case study identified the lack of a state strategy and goals for a new state preschool initiative as a possible contributor to the challenges it experienced in achieving high quality preschool. The study was conducted a few years after the state supreme court mandated that New Jersey provide high quality preschool in the 30 highest-poverty school districts. The study collected and analyzed qualitative and quantitative data to review New Jersey's initial progress in implementing high quality preschool in low-income school districts. It found the preschool programs to be poor quality and under-enrolled. Based on the data, the case study concluded that several factors potentially contributed to these challenges, including a lack of quality standards, improvement practices, funding, accountability, as well as implementation barriers (for instance, lack of parental awareness and lack of transportation).

Practice strength:

- The professional recommendations partially support the indicator. The recommendations identify some of the components the indicator suggests are necessary in the strategic vision and plan but do not address all six components. Professional recommendations suggest that states need to articulate a mission and vision that guides their work and is outcome driven, and that the vision should include all children. The expert recommendations also partially addressed the role of a state plan in transforming early care and education. NASEM argues that state planning is critical to advancing the goals of early care and education. NASEM notes that a state plan should outline several key components, including key strategies the state would use to address quality within specific contexts, building the supply of providers, assessing and monitoring progress toward goals, and ensuring accountability.

IDM PL 2: State Agency (e.g., Department of Education or Health and Family Services) leadership recognizes early learning and pre-k education as a priority in agency planning and budgeting documents, and as a critical component in attaining key state educational goals. The goals of the pre-k early learning strategic plan as a key part of the agency's strategic plan are integrated into the larger mission and educational, human service, and community goals with adequate and sustainable funding and resources (staffing, funding, accountability systems) provided to discharge the responsibilities assigned. The early learning unit is part of the agency's leadership that makes decisions about major aspects of the agency's operations, including budget, staffing, priorities, and strategic planning.

Research strength:

- Two case studies discuss the structure of an early learning unit and aligning the state agency's goals with the goals of a pre-K initiative. A case study on New York City's first citywide implementation of universal preschool in the 1980s—in which early child care delivery was fragmented across two city agencies and three early childhood systems—identified differences in the three systems' organizational structures, funding sources, and service delivery systems as a challenge to implementing the initiative. The study reported that although city leaders created a new unit within the mayor's office to oversee both agencies in implementing the preschool initiative, the interagency structure was complex and may have contributed to conflicting goals within the city agencies. Similarly, a case study on New Jersey's implementation of universal preschool in high-poverty districts suggested that having a unit in the state office of early childhood education to serve as the single entity for making and enforcing policies may have been helpful to the initiative.

- The New Jersey case study, which was conducted a few years into the preschool initiative, suggested that inadequate funding potentially contributed to the poor quality of the preschool programs. The study observed that the programs did not have the funding to enroll all eligible children or provide high quality education (for instance, facilities and teacher pay were inadequate).

Practice strength:

- The professional recommendations underscore the indicator, suggesting that the state agency leadership recognizes early learning as a priority. It identifies key components that promote successful implementation of state and local efforts to build early childhood systems, including governance, funding, technical assistance, staffing, performance measures, advocacy, and state and local infrastructure. The identification of these key elements, many of which are listed in the indicator, suggests professional experts support this indicator. However, the professional recommendations do not address the extent to which the early learning unit should work with or partner with agency leadership. The expert recommendations also partially support this indicator. Experts support state-level entities ensuring adequate, equitable, and sustainable funding to advance high quality early care and education. However, the experts do not comment on the role that the agency should play with respect to other key stakeholders in state leadership.

IDM PL 3: Inside-Outside Strategy: The process of engagement for ECE advocates and state and community leaders includes the following components and goals:

- **Engage each other through formal ongoing collaboration and communication.**
- **Align goals, plans, and strategies for pre-k advancement and improvement.**
- **Openly resolve and agree upon any unintentional differences in approach.**
- **Be able to clearly articulate respective roles, interests, and expectations.**
- **Coordinate efforts to foster added value, rather than engaging in competing efforts.**

Research strength:

- Three case studies discuss coordination between ECE advocates and state and community leaders. In the case study on New York City's first citywide implementation of universal preschool in the 1980s, findings suggest that conflicting goals and agendas between and among the public sector and community stakeholders, and across different jurisdictions, created a barrier that had to be overcome before stakeholders could reach a compromise. Another case study, this one focusing on Florida's voluntary universal pre-K initiative, examined the conditions that led to the passage of the pre-K policy. The case study highlighted the creation of an advisory council — which included a diverse group of state, local, and advocate leaders and was chaired by the lieutenant governor — as a factor in passing pre-K legislation that incorporated policies to support high quality programming. Similarly, a case study on Washington State's early learning quality highlighted the role of formalized public-private partnerships in building an early learning infrastructure. In Washington, the governor, leadership at the Bill & Melinda Gates Foundation, and business and community funders co-founded a nonprofit organization to align and coordinate public and private investments in and advocate for early learning. Although there were disagreements over which goals to pursue, the advocacy organization's existence, along with private investments to other advocacy organizations, helped keep early learning quality on the agenda of the governor, legislators, funders, and other community stakeholders.

Practice strength:

- The professional recommendations partially support the role that advocates should play in advancing early care at the state level. They recommend that local advocates, including community leaders or regional stakeholders, be included in discussions and decision making, and that advocates have an opportunity to determine the vision and structure of systems building work. The expert recommendations also partially support this indicator, although they do not address the role of advocates and community leaders per se. They note that both private and public funders should support the development of a state plan. Neither the professional nor expert recommendations discuss the elements of partnership between state and advocate leaders, nor do they discuss the nature of that partnership.

IDM PL 4: ECE Advocacy Coalition organizations are unified around a pre-K improvement agenda and include the following components:

- **Coordinated efforts to support the same or similar goals for pre-K quality and/or improvement**

- **Formal channels for communication, collaboration and coordination involve consistent participation from a core group of organizations**

- **Actively engage with and represent the interests of local stakeholder groups from diverse communities (e.g., children, families, and educators)**

- **Understand how pre-K policies and implementation may play out for children, families, and educators**

- **Clearly define the coalition (e.g., membership, leadership, roles, processes) and include diverse and strategic voices and perspectives that are critical to achieving advocacy goals**

Research strength:

- Four case studies discuss the role of early childhood advocacy groups or local program stakeholders in pre-K improvement initiatives. A case study examining how Florida passed its voluntary universal pre-K policy observed that the ECE advocacy community across the state was unified in the common goal of persuading voters to pass a ballot initiative requiring the state to create a universal pre-K policy. Similarly, a Washington State case study noted that having a unified and inclusive advocacy coalition was critical to the passage of legislation that established statewide quality requirements and incentives. In West Virginia, universal pre-K legislation requires key stakeholders in local preschool programs to collaborate with one another, and further specifies that they must plan collaboratively and meet regularly. The policy was intended to prevent competition and promote cooperation between county, Head Start, and private preschool programs to maximize the funding and resources available for universal pre-K. The case study examined how the local stakeholders make the collaboration work. The findings highlighted the importance of formal communication channels, open and frequent communication, mutual trust, and coordinated efforts around a shared vision in fostering collaboration. The case study of New York City's first universal pre-K initiative (which occurred in the 1980s under the administration of then-Mayor Koch) observed a lack of coordination and unification among stakeholders in the city's three distinct early childhood systems and across jurisdictions, and suggested this presented a key challenge to implementing the initiative. The study also observed a lack of formal mechanisms to sustain community involvement after establishing the initiative and suggested this may have made it easier for the next administration to abandon universal pre-K during leaner fiscal times. Finally, policymakers also failed to foresee implementation challenges that arose for programs and teachers.

Practice strength:

- Professional recommendations underscore the role that advocacy coalitions play in building an agency but do not identify the specific components advocates and advocacy coalitions should use to be most effective. The recommendations note that local collaboratives can and should play a role in a state's advocacy and that the role they play is critical to the advocacy work that is needed. The professional recommendations note that developing common messages and materials at the local level is important in coordinating efforts to improve pre-K systems. The professional recommendations also speak to the role of regularly meeting with and engaging local stakeholders from diverse groups to ensure that policymakers understand the local issues. The expert recommendations do not address the role of advocacy coalitions in systems building.

IDM PL 5: Grassroots Engagement: ECE advocacy organizations/coalition has authentic engagement with grassroots organizations and voices to develop their goals, strategies, and capacity (budget, staffing), and incorporates the following components:

- **Shared leadership and power between coalition and grassroots organizing groups**

- **Ongoing collaborations with grassroots organizing groups, including families, educators, and service providers**

- **Using information from grassroot groups to inform an advocacy agenda, goals, strategies, and implementation**

- **Leveraging grassroots voices in advocacy work**

- **Reflecting with grassroots organizations on the results of advocacy and discussing next steps.**

- **Establishing a "2-way feedback loop" that is part of standard operations of the advocacy organizations/coalition and is reflected in their budget, staffing, strategic plans, etc.**

- **Advocates and grassroots leaders may have some differences in objectives and strategies, but they are transparent, strategic, and will not get in the way of their common goals**

Practice strength:

- The professional recommendations acknowledge the role of buy-in and engagement from local leaders and community groups. Policy changes need buy-in, and buy-in happens when communities have a stake in the decision-making process. However, professional recommendations do not clearly document or suggest that all the components listed in the IDM indicator are necessary or critical to establish buy-in and/or authentic engagement. The expert recommendations do not address this indicator.

IDM PL 6: Grasstops stakeholders: key, non-governmental influencers of the political process, including business, philanthropy, higher education community, unions, are focused on early learning improvement as a priority. These key influencers align behind ECE advocates' pre-K agenda and demonstrate a willingness to use their access to key policy leaders and their political capital and other resources to encourage action on pre-K. Leading state ECE advocates play a leadership role in facilitating and coordinating their activities on behalf of pre-K.

Research strength:

- Two case studies discuss the role of key nongovernmental influencers in early childhood advocacy. The case study of Florida's voluntary universal pre-K program suggested that a business leader with

connections to legislators, donors, and political operatives may have played a central role in passing Florida's voluntary universal pre-K legislation. The study observed that his efforts to leverage his connections and influence may have helped to unify the early childhood advocacy community and voters in supporting a ballot initiative that mandated universal pre-K. The case study on Washington State's quality improvement focus emphasized the instrumental role of philanthropy in seeding early initiatives needed for building political support. Specifically, the Bill & Melinda Gates Foundation funded the state's pilot of the quality rating and improvement system (QRIS), co-founded and co-chaired a public-private partnership to support and align early learning initiatives, and funded a K–12 advocacy organization to develop an early learning advocacy coalition. The study suggested that these efforts helped institute the foundation on which the state built its QRIS and a broad advocacy coalition capable of pushing for early learning legislation.

Practice strength:

- Both the professional and expert recommendations acknowledge the important role that other key stakeholders play in advancing policymaking and systems building at the state level. Both encourage a diverse set of actors to be engaged in advocacy. Professional recommendations suggest that it is best to engage business, faith, and civic leaders. The professional recommendations note that developing champions of early childhood initiatives at the local and state level from a diverse group of stakeholders is an important factor in making change and expanding dialogue around early care and education. Experts recommend building a coalition of both public and private entities that could support and potentially fund the development of a strategic plan to finance high quality care and education.

IDM PL 7: Legislative Leadership: The extent to which key elected legislators have a track record of supporting pre-K quality through policy and funding.

Practice strength:

- Both the professional and expert recommendations support the idea that effective systems building requires both policymaking and consistent funding that are backed by legislation and legislators. The professional recommendations note that the funding should be both adequate and flexible to allow local entities and states to have a say in how the funds are used. Expert recommendations agree. NASEM notes that (1) federal and state governments should provide sustained funding; and (2) state government or other state-level entities should act as coordinators for federal and state funding that supports early care and education.

IDM PL 8: Gubernatorial Leadership: The extent to which the current state governor has a track record of supporting pre-K quality.

Research strength:

- Four case studies discuss the governor's role in supporting systemic improvements to early childhood programs. In Washington, New York City, and Florida, case studies suggest that the governor and mayor may have played a role in promoting or discouraging policy around pre-K. In Washington, the governor encouraged a private funder to implement a QRIS as part of the funder's demonstration project, helped establish a public-private partnership to align and coordinate early learning investments, and supported the creation of a new cabinet-level agency to oversee early learning. New York City's earliest universal preschool policies were the work of the mayor's office. Similarly, in

Florida, the governor, unsatisfied with the first version of the bill that passed the legislature, vetoed it because it lacked sufficient emphasis on quality. Conversely, a case study based in New Jersey concluded that the state's early attempts at implementing universal preschool in poor school districts, as mandated by the state supreme court, resulted in poor quality and under-enrolled programs. The authors suggested that a severe lack of funding and policy support from the governor's administration may have contributed to these challenges.

Practice strength:

- The professional recommendations underscore the role that governors play in supporting policy and pre-K initiatives. They suggest that securing buy-in from the governor and legislators is needed from the outset in any systems building effort. They also suggest that advocates and other leaders communicate outcomes of statewide initiatives to the governor's office. The professional recommendations note that securing bipartisan political support for an early childhood initiative is essential. They suggest that securing support from both Democratic and Republican leaders in the state legislature and governor's office allows all parties to have a sense of ownership in the initiative. The expert recommendations do not address the role that the governor plays specifically in systems building.

IDM PL 9: Equity is front and center in all discussions around pre-K policies and practices. The ways in which state teams conduct their work, and the activities they engage in, including data collection efforts, are designed to ensure early learning programs, early childhood educators, children, teachers, and families will succeed regardless of their race, ethnicity, income, and language differences. State teams engage in all four of the following activities to promote equity:

- **Supporting the vision of a successful pre-K system in school readiness for all children regardless of race, income, and language differences**

- **Bringing together a diverse stakeholder group that represents the diverse voices within the pre-K field, including teachers, parents, community leaders, advocates, program leaders, and state officials**

- **Ensuring data are collected on all populations of children and are disaggregated to understand barriers and gaps in opportunity and achievement. Data are shared with stakeholders and decisions are made with input from all voices.**

- **Policies are drafted to ensure strategies are deliberate to meet the needs of targeted groups to reach the vision of success**

Practice strength:

- The professional recommendations support the importance of equity, whereas the expert recommendations partially support it. The professional recommendations note that a state's mission and vision for high quality pre-K programs should be inclusive of all children, that diverse stakeholders should be included in decision making, and that data should be used to ensure progress is being made. The expert recommendations note that all children and families should have access to affordable, high quality early care and education, and that this should not be dependent on parent characteristics such as family income or work status. Although the expert recommendations address equity as being important to pre-K policies and practices, they do not identify the four activities that the IDM suggests promote equity.

C. Overall ratings of research and practice support for indicators

Figures 1 and 2 summarize the overall strength of the research and practice support for each PL indicator.

Figure 1. Indicator key for overall ratings of research and practice strength

Research strength	Practice strength
■ Strong support	■ Strong support
◹ Some support	◹ Some support
☐ No support	☐ No support

Figure 2. Overall ratings of reseach and practice strength

Political Leadership	Research strength	Practice strength
1 Pre-K Office Leadership	◹	◹
2 State Agency Leadership	◹	◹
3 Inside-Outside Agency Coordination and Support	■	◹
4 ECE Advocacy Coalition	■	◹
5 Grassroots Engagement	☐	◹
6 Grasstop Stakeholders	◹	■
7 Legislative Branch	☐	■
8 Executive Branch	■	◹
9 Leadership Data Collection for Equity Goals	☐	◹

D. Detailed ratings of research and practice support for indicators

Figures 3 and 4 give additional detail on the research and practice support for each PL indicator.

Figure 3. Indicator key for detailed ratings of research and practice strength

▸**Research strength**

| | 1 | 2 | 3 | 4 |

Number of case studies

Case studies that support policy outcomes

▸**Practice strength**

Supported by professional best practices

Criteria met?
■ Yes ☐ No ◪ Partially

Supported by expert recommendations

Criteria met?
■ Yes ☐ No ◪ Partially
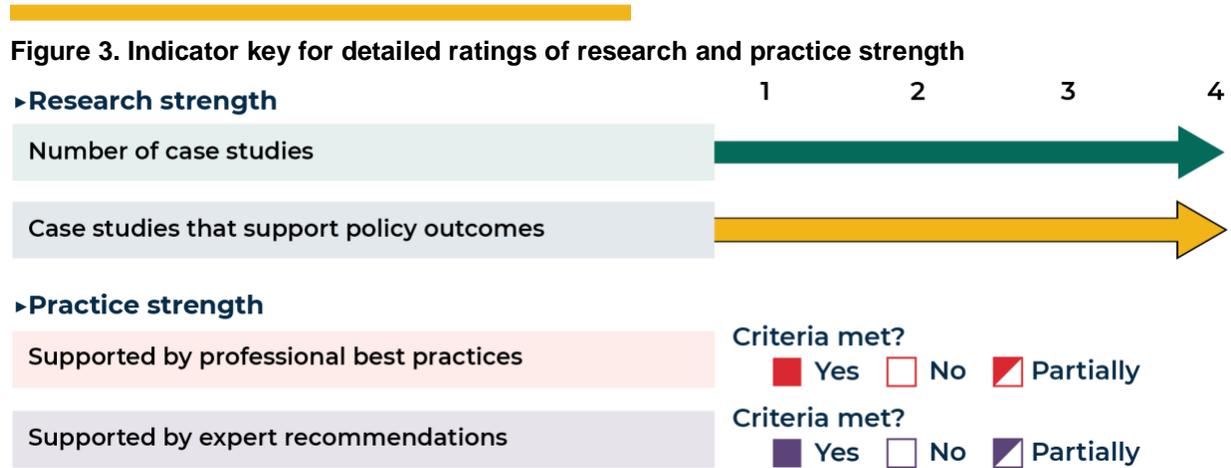
Figure 4. Detailed ratings of research and practice strength

Political Leadership	Research strength	Practice strength
1 Pre-K Office Leadership		
2 State Agency Leadership		
3 Inside-Outside Agency Coordination and Support		
4 ECE Advocacy Coalition		
5 Grassroots Engagement		
6 Grasstop Stakeholders		
7 Legislative Branch		
8 Executive Branch		
9 Leadership Data Collection for Equity Goals		
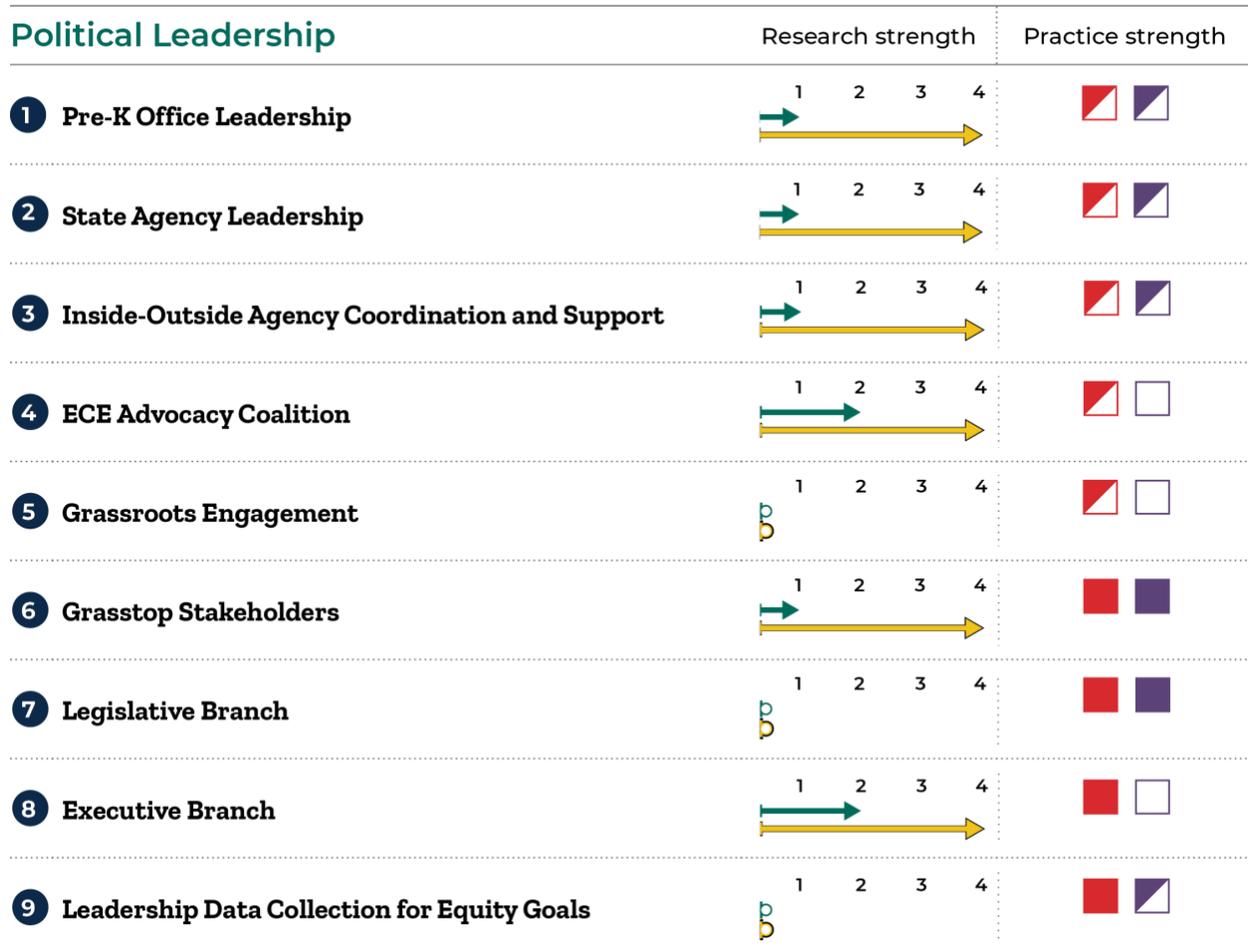
Appendix

A. Identifying literature

Mathematica staff conducted a review of the literature focused on political leadership in improving state preschool systems. We worked with our professional librarians to develop targeted search terms. We then searched eight databases for published articles.[5] We also identified a few studies through a targeted online search via the Bill & Melinda Gates Foundation. Using the information in the abstracts, we screened out studies that did not meet our inclusion criteria.

All eligible studies had to meet the following criteria:

- Based in the United States

- Focused on children ages 3 through 5

- Focused on pre-K policy

- Assessed the policy outcome of the political conditions using case study designs

- Published since 2001

For the PL element, we adjusted our eligibility criteria in order to include study designs and outcomes that best fit this element. We removed the criterion that a study had to evaluate child or teacher/classroom outcomes using a randomized controlled trial, quasi-experimental design, or correlational design. Instead, we searched for case studies that sought to understand how a state or city's preschool reform initiatives came together, including the political conditions that may have facilitated or impeded the efforts. We would expect beneficial political conditions to contribute to policies that help move a state toward equitable or accessible preschool (such as instituting universal preschool). In contrast, for the other elements in the IDM, which focused on state or program practices, we expected that effective state or program practices would translate into improved child or teacher/classroom outcomes.

We procured the full text of the eligible studies. Next, we screened the studies again to identify whether the studies mapped to any of the Implementation Development Map (IDM) indicators and to confirm that the studies met our inclusion criteria. We screened out any studies that did not focus on an IDM indicator (Table A.1). For the PL element, after examining the full texts of the 18 studies initially identified, 5 met the inclusion criteria and provided high quality support for at least one indicator.

Table A.1. Number of studies identified and reviewed for each IDM element

IDM element	Studies identified	Studies fully reviewed	High quality case studies
Political Leadership	18	5	5

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[5] The eight databases are Academic Search Premier, APA PsycInfo, Cochrane Database of Systematic Reviews, Education Research Complete, ERIC, ProQuest Dissertations, SAGE Journals, and Scopus.

B.   Assessing support for IDM indicators

We assessed each indicator on two dimensions to summarize the support for the indicator in the research and professional/expert recommendations.

To identify the quality of the case studies, reviewers checked that primary or secondary data were collected systematically or thoroughly, and that analysis was conducted thoroughly and without apparent biases (Dimension 1). To identify whether the studies show support for an indicator, reviewers assessed whether the political conditions described in an indicator were present when a state or city was forming or implementing a policy to strengthen early childhood systems—or, inversely, whether a study found that a lack of the political conditions impeded the formation or implementation of such policies (Dimension 2). To determine the extent to which professional best practices and expert recommendations supported the indicators, we reviewed key practice documents (Dimensions 3 and 4). Below, we describe each step.

1.   Rating study quality

We wanted to identify studies with results we could be confident were valid. We categorized studies as described in Table A.2.

Table A.2. Study quality ratings

Study rating	Description
Provides high quality support	These are well-conducted case studies that use systematic or thorough data collection and analysis methods. Studies may include primary collection of qualitative or quantitative data, or secondary data such as legislation, historical records, or other public records.
Provides low quality support	These are studies with unconvincing results. These include articles with brief summaries of a policy in a state or city or expert opinion articles that lack clear or systematic data collection or analysis methods.

We then summarized the number of case studies on state or local preschool policy formation or implementation, as well as the percentage of those case studies that provide support for each indicator. Studies can support several indicators.

2.   Rating study findings

We categorized whether a study concluded that the political conditions described in an indicator were present when a policy to strengthen early childhood systems was successfully created or implemented — or, inversely, whether a study concluded that a lack of the political conditions impeded the policy formation or implementation (Table A.3).

Table A.3. Study impact definitions

Study impacts	Definition
Favorable	Political condition in the indicator was present and may have contributed to forming or implementing a policy to strengthen early childhood systems; or, inversely, a lack of a political condition impeded policy formation or implementation
Unfavorable	Political condition in the indicator was present but may have impeded the formation or implementation of policy to strengthen early childhood systems

3. Assessment of professional best practices and expert recommendations

Given that the IDM is a tool designed to improve state systems, we determined which elements and indicators were supported by professional best practice standards and expert recommendations from NASEM. NASEM works to analyze available evidence to advance the learning and development of children, youth, and families and presents consensus recommendations that undergo peer review before publication.[6]

A team of researchers reviewed IDM indicators to determine how well they aligned or agreed with these professional standards. We assessed whether each indicator was supported by professional recommendations and expert recommendations by using a scale of "met," "partially met," or "not met." We used "partially met" when aspects of the indicator were supported, but not necessarily when the full indicator was met, because each indicator often covers several ideas.

4. Assigning overall ratings on dimensions

Based on the rating of number of case studies, case studies that support policy outcomes, and professional and expert recommendations, we rated each indicator on four dimensions (Tables A.4 and A.5). The research support dimensions were rated on a scale of 1 to 4, and the expert recommendations were rated as met, partially met, and not met.

Table A.4. Definitions of dimension ratings for research support

Research support dimension	1	2	3	4
Number of case studies	1 to 3 case studies	4 to 6 case studies	7 to 9 case studies	10 or more case studies
Case studies that support policy outcomes	1–25% of studies improve policy or political outcomes	26–50% of studies improve policy or political outcomes	51–75% of studies improve policy or political outcomes	76–100% of studies improve policy or political outcomes

Table A.5. Definitions of dimension ratings for practice support

Recommendation support dimension	Not met	Partially met	Met
Supported by professional best practices	The indicator was not supported by the BUILD Initiative	Part of the indicator was supported by the BUILD Initiative	The full indicator was supported by the BUILD Initiative
Supported by expert recommendations	The indicator was not supported by NASEM	Part of the indicator was supported by NASEM	The full indicator was supported by NASEM

NASEM = National Academies of Sciences, Engineering, and Medicine.

5. Assigning overall ratings on research and practice strength

To make the rating even more accessible, we summarized two dimensions of support: research strength and practice strength (Table A.6).

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[6] See, for example: "The Nuts and Bolts of Building Early Childhood Systems Through State/Local Initiatives." BUILD Initiative: Strong Foundations for Our Youngest Children, January 2014.

Table A.6. Overall ratings on research and practice strength

Recommendation support dimension	Full support	Some support	No support
Research strength (number of case studies with findings that suggest political leadership could improve policy)	Three or more studies	One or two studies	No studies
Practice strength (whether supported by professional best practices or expert recommendations)	Both professional best practices AND expert recommendations support the indicator	At least one set of professional best practices or expert recommendations partially supports the indicator, or only one set (and not both) fully supports the indicator	Neither professional best practices nor expert recommendations support the indicator

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