

# **Community Readiness**

## Asset Mapping for Early Learning Hubs

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## PURPOSE OF THIS DOCUMENT

The purpose of this document is to provide an asset mapping process for Early Learning Hub leadership so they can deepen their understanding of the regional assets available to them for creating strategies and actions to achieve positive early learning outcomes for children ages 0- 6.

This work is being done to support the following Early Learning Council goals:

- Children ready for kindergarten when they arrive.
- Children raised in stable and attached families.
- Services that are integrated and aligned into one early learning system focused on results.

## WHAT IS ASSET MAPPING

Asset mapping is the process of creating an inventory of the resources and strengths (individual and organizational capital, materials and equipment, time, space, information, skills, etc.) available in a community, which they may leverage to solve problems, overcome challenges, and meet needs.

For the Early Learning Hubs, asset mapping is focused on bringing together resources from 5 key community sectors; K-12, Health, Social & Human services, Early Learning and Pre-Kindergarten, and business. Within these communities are resources that may be leveraged to achieve positive early learning outcomes for Oregon children. Asset mapping provides a framework for systematically identifying these assets so they may be leveraged effectively.

## WHY DO ASSET MAPPING

For the Early Learning Hubs, asset mapping serves to examine what resources and strengths the community can bring to bear on the needs of children between the age of 0 and 6 in order to prepare them for kindergarten and success in life. It is an exploration of the community assets that can lead to kindergarten readiness, stable attached families, and an integrated and aligned early learning system focused on results.

In general, asset mapping works in conjunction with needs assessment. With an identified inventory of assets it is possible to look at each community need and see what

assets may solve the problem. If more than one asset meets the need then the burden of solving the need is reduced by distributing it across multiple assets. If a need exists and there are no assets available in the community then this brings awareness to a “gap” between what is needed and what is available, which the community then must solve for.

The emerging Early Learning Hubs and their leadership understand the needs and assets of their communities related to preparing children for kindergarten. Together, the members of the leadership team have a rich understanding of the needs they must address. Asset mapping will provide a means by which leadership from all sectors across their defined Hub region can see what resources are available to solve problems in all the communities.

## WHO IS INVOLVED: LEADERSHIP & BACKBONE ORGANIZATION

Key question: Who will be involved and what are their roles and responsibilities?

At the minimum Early Learning Hub leadership will include representatives from 5 sectors are a part of the Hub. These 5 sectors include 1) K-12 education, 2) health, 3) social & human services, 4) early childhood education, and 5) business. In addition, Early Learning Hub leadership will include parents.

In addition to the leadership team consider including other community leaders who may be able to provide information regarding assets that can be leveraged for Early Learning. If time and resources are available consider engaging residents and organizations in your asset mapping process by conducting a survey (online or in person), conducting a focus group, or having community meetings (these approaches can also double as a way to gather more information on community needs). Additionally, many organizations, such as Head Start or home visiting programs, have already conducted an asset and needs assessment and may add valuable information to your map.

On the next page list possible participants and consider what their roles and responsibilities might be in the Early Learning Hub.

Who will be involved?	What are their roles & responsibilities?
<p>Health</p> <p>K-12 education</p> <p>Social and Human services</p> <p>Early learning and prekindergarten services (including early intervention/early childhood special education efforts and the full range of child care and providers)</p> <p>Business and community member</p> <p>Other</p>	

## ASSET MAPPING PROCESS

Following is a process for asset mapping for the leadership team of an emerging Early Learning Hub to consider. It is framed as a sequence of questions for the team to respond to and incorporate other stakeholders who will add value to the conversation.

For each questions it is recommended that a brainstorm of possible answers be created first, then a second round of conversation be conducted to achieve a more in depth understanding of the assets, relate them to the needs of the community, and develop actions and strategies for meeting those needs.

Try to answer these questions from the perspective of your entire regional community, not as representatives from each individual community or sector, and keep focused on the fact that this work is for the benefit of children

### Key Questions

The questions below are designed to support the development of an Early Learning Hub asset map and initial planning for action strategies to achieve the early learning outcomes.

1. Where are the natural touch points for children 0 – 6 in your community?
2. What community resources and assets exist that can or are contributing to positive outcomes for children?
3. What are the needs of children in your community?
4. Which assets may be used to meet which needs?
5. What actions might you take, using your assets, to address these needs and improve the outcomes for children?
6. What are the criteria actions must meet?
7. What actions will you take?

## Types and Levels of Community Assets

When considering the assets of the community it is useful to work across a range of levels within each sector. Within each sector (Health, K-12, etc.) there are individuals, groups, organizations, city, county, state, national government, and social structures that may have some assets that can be leveraged to solve the early learning needs of the community. As you look at each sector, consider each of the different levels to get the broadest possible view of assets.

In addition there are many types of assets that may be leveraged to meet community needs and that exist at each of the levels mentioned above. For example:

- Capital & funds
- Time
- Space and physical locations
- Materials and equipment
- Communications
- Power
- Connections
- Services
- Skills, abilities, and expertise
- Information, knowledge and wisdom

The next two pages contain an asset inventory worksheet and a “touch-point” inventory worksheet.



## Natural Touch Points

Natural touch points are places where children will naturally be within the community. As an asset they provide communications and service delivery opportunities. To explore the natural touch points, brainstorm a list of all the locations children naturally are in your communities.

<b>Where are the natural touch points for children 0 – 6 in your community?</b>
Health
K-12 education
Social and Human services
Early learning and prekindergarten services (including early intervention/early childhood special education efforts and the full range of child care and providers)
Business and community members
Other

## Asset Inventory

With your Early Learning Hub leadership team, answer the following question to get a snapshot of community assets across the five sectors:

<b>What community resources and assets exist that can or are contributing to positive outcomes for children?</b>
Health
K-12 education
Social and Human services
Early learning and prekindergarten services (including early intervention/early childhood special education efforts and the full range of child care and providers)
Business and community members
Other

## Needs Inventory

There are many types of needs in communities. The primary focus of this work is to identify needs relevant to early learning and children. Sometimes there are needs with no assets to meet them with. This lack of asset is called an “Asset Gap”. Asset gaps are a secondary type of need. They are not the need of a child but the need of the system that will work to meet children’s needs. These are key areas of concern and should be recognized in addition to the direct needs of children.

Answer the following question to get a snapshot of community asset gaps and community needs across the five sectors asset gaps.

<b>What are the needs of children in your community?</b>

## Matching Needs to Assets

List the needs of the community that relate to early learning and outcomes for children ages 0-6 on the left hand side and available assets on the right hand side. As you list them, note which assets may be used to overcome any particular needs. Find which needs have sufficient assets to address them, which assets exist but do not address a need, and which needs have no assets to leverage. This process is not meant to be exhaustive or to get the leadership team caught in over analysis. Its purpose is to engage conversation and explore relationships. Four key items to look for are:

1. Overburdened Assets: Are there any single assets that cover a lot of needs and will this be too much for that one asset to handle?
2. Collaboration Opportunities: Are there any needs that can be covered by multiple assets? This provides an opportunity for assets to be combined or work together to distribute the work to be done.
3. Asset Gaps: Are there any needs that do not have any assets to address them?
4. Surplus: Are there any assets that are unused? How might they be repurposed or assigned?

<b>Which assets may be used to meet which needs?</b>	
<b>Needs</b>	<b>Asset to Leverage</b>

## ASSET MAP BASED ACTION PLANNING

The work of asset mapping and needs matching provides valuable information to the community, and it gains value when it is applied. After answering the asset mapping questions move into action by putting together an action plan.

### Create actions to achieve outcomes

Based upon your community assets and needs, proposed metrics in the Early Learning RFA, and your leadership team's criteria, brainstorm actions for the first year to achieve the outcomes. Stay open to as many possible actions as you can generate. You will decide which to prioritize and act on after you create your criteria, which is the next step.

**What actions might you take, using your assets, to address your needs and improve the outcomes for children?**

**Develop criteria for selecting actions**

Based upon your community assets and needs, the EL Hub outcomes and proposed metrics, what criteria are important to your EL Hub leadership for prioritizing actions?

<b>What are the criteria actions must meet?</b>
<i>Example: Ensuring target population is served as defined per statute</i>

After identifying your criteria for selecting actions go back through the list of actions you generated and eliminate actions that do not meet the criteria.

To achieve the highest leverage from the actions you have chosen consider prioritizing them by which ones are most likely to help achieve the primary goals of 1) kindergarten readiness, 2) stable and attached families, and 3) an integrated and aligned early learning system that focuses on results.

## Create & implement an action plan

Once the “criteria” for prioritizing actions are decided upon use them to select which actions you will take. Put those actions into an action plan template that shows what the action is, what need it is addressing, what asset it is using, who is doing it, who they are accountable to for getting it done, and when it should be done by. Then go do it.

<b>What is the action?</b>	<b>What need is it addressing?</b>	<b>What asset is it using and how?</b>	<b>Who is responsible for it?</b>	<b>Who are they accountable to?</b>	<b>Due date</b>

## Conclusion

Upon completing the work of asset mapping, the leadership team should have a richer understanding of the assets they will be able to bring to bear to address the needs of children and improve early learning outcomes. Gathering this information should also provide an opportunity for the leadership team to see the significance of working across sectors and developing innovative solutions for solving the challenges around early learning in Oregon. Finally, an action plan should be developed to move the community towards achieving those outcomes; kindergarten readiness, stable attached families, and an integrated and aligned early learning system focused on results.

## Other Questions and Items to Consider

In the Early Learning Hub development process, there are a number of instruments leadership may use to assist in Hub development. The first of which is the *Early Childhood and Family Service Provider Readiness Assessment Checklist*. Following are a few questions from this document related to asset mapping, which you may consider answering as a leadership team to strengthen the value of your asset mapping process.

- Does your organization have the capacity to grow, engage with others, and use resources effectively?
- Are families, their advocates and local agencies systematically engaged in the assessment, planning, resource allocation, and decision making for coordinating service provision with other agencies?
- Does your organization maintain an inventory of provider resources and programs that fund services?
- Is there a process for identifying duplication of services, underused programs, and service gaps to effectively budget across a community?
- Are the specific service needs of various target populations well documented?
- Have service users and other stakeholders participated in a community assessment process?

Another key document is the *Early Learning Hub Community Readiness Assessment*. A number of key components and structural concepts from this document, related to asset mapping, are included here for further development. They are presented here as elements that will help strengthen the capabilities of a Hub.

First is a process:

Applicant's should conduct a collaborative assessment of their proposed service area evaluating both the availability of each service or operational requirement, and prioritizing the importance of that service/operational function to the Applicant's unique, overall strategy for improving outcomes for children and families in the proposed service area.

Second is a list of tasks to accomplish.

- Barriers to building an accessible, cohesive, early learning system locally are identified with a plan for overcoming them.



- An inclusive community assessment process has taken place and has resulted in a commonly understood definition of the problem and set of strategies for improving outcomes.
- Early Learning Hub has a comprehensive inventory of resources and providers for proposed service area.
- Fiscal agent and governing body have created an inventory of all local, state, federal, and private dollars that can fund both service coordination and services themselves.
- As part of the initial analysis, specific service needs of various target populations are documented and supported by data.
- Hub partners have identified the strengths and challenges associated with existing programs' ability to achieve specified outcomes via the service provider readiness checklist.